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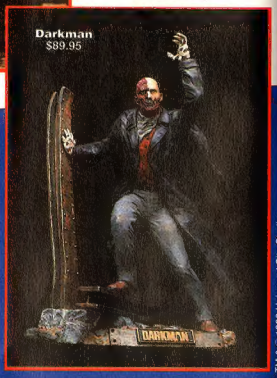

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COMICS scene YEAR BOOK #2

Inside the Comics Scene

5 **THE SELLING OF SUPERMAN**
Dead or alive, this hero sells comic books.

7 **METALMANIA!!!**
Those Metal Men get polished again.

10 **MAN OF STEEL**
Kirk Alyn was really super in the serials.

16 **BRONZE GHOSTS**
Many writers penned Doc Savage's exploits.

24 **ARTIST OF BRONZE**
Bob Larkin painted savage covers.

28 **SAVAGE CREATOR**
Long ago, Lester Dent fashioned a legend.

35 **WAS JACK KIRBY OVERWORKED?**
He sure did draw lotsa comic books.

40 **MAKING MARVELS**
Kurt Busiek looks at the heroic early days.

46 **TOM & JERRY TALK**
They have to—it's in the movie contract.

51 **CADILLACS & DINOSAURS**
It's a brave new world uncovered by Mark Schultz.

56 **FATHER TO THE MENACE**
Drawing on real life, Hank Ketcham created Dennis.

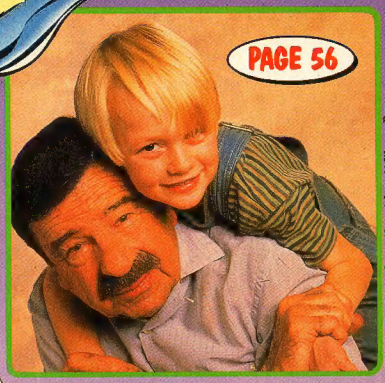
63 **MOVIE MENACE**
Now, he gets into reel trouble on film.

64 **THE METEOR MAN**
Superheroic Robert Townsend fights for justice.

67 **WALT DISNEY & SALVADOR DALI**
Talk about the odd couple of animation.

75 **ALADDIN'S EXPLOITS**
Rub the lamp for Disney's latest masterwork.

Art: Jack Kirby/Trademark & Copyright 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group



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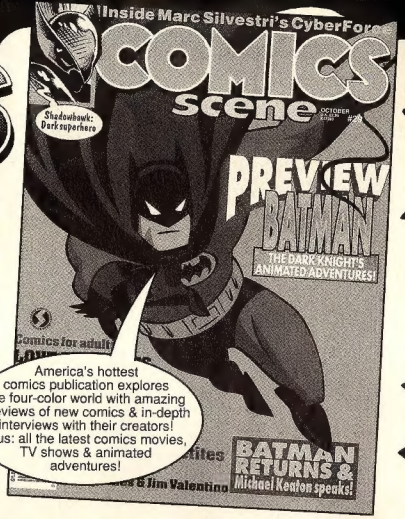
COMICS scene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BUYING, SELLING & THE AMERICAN WAY

The story's not over till the cash register rings.

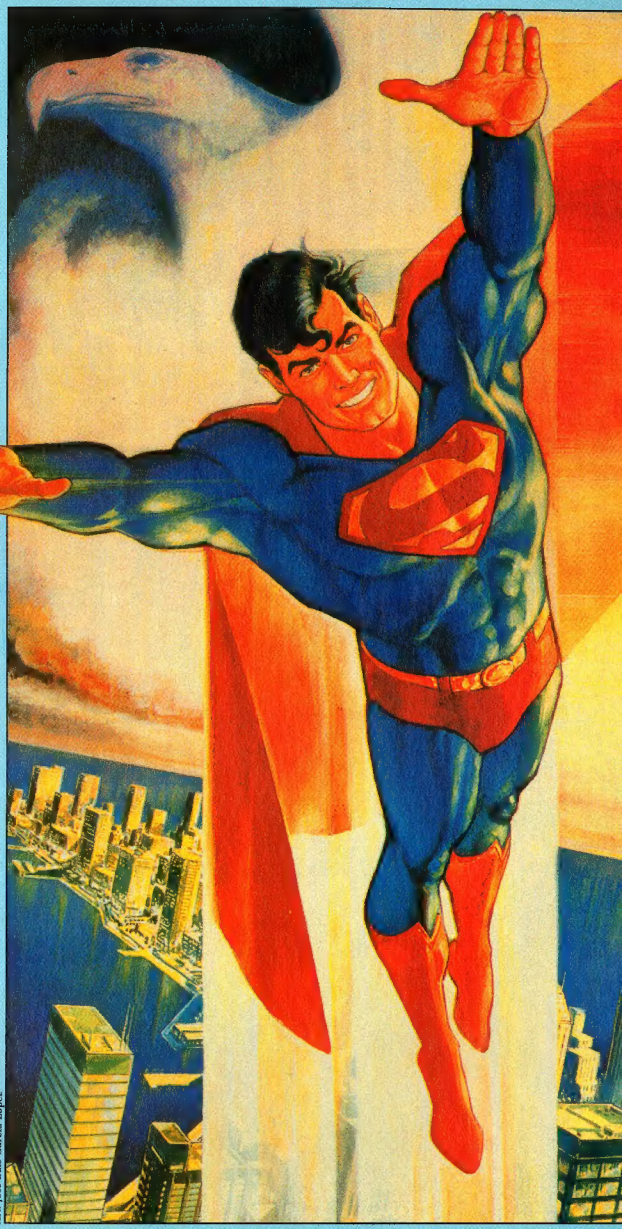
By MAUREEN McTIGUE

As the Supermen storyline sizzles on its way to an eagerly-awaited late August wrap-up, editor Mike Carlin tries to explain just what happened to the Man of Steel in terms of hype, sales and collectibility. The record-breaking sales seen by the Superman quartet were preceded by news coverage and public outrage the likes of which a comic book has never seen before.

"Last March [1992], we told all the distributors that we were killing Superman," Carlin says, "and heard not a peep out of anybody. Not until it got in the newspapers did it start blowing wide open, and we couldn't control it. Many people complained about the hype that we got, and it wasn't us. We couldn't stop it if we wanted to. You *can't* control that. If a war had broken out the day the Superman story broke, this would have died, literally. In the comics world, we would have increased our sales by double, which is all that I could have ever hoped for, and we're way beyond that now.

"It's hard in this business today, where everything is presolicited. You have to tell everybody where the big events are or they won't order enough; it's tough to have a surprise without misleading people who are ordering."

DC hoped to rein in control on the hype regarding Superman's death, but were unable to do so. Instead, they kept up with it. Marketing changed to fit what was known, keeping secret the identities of the new Supermen (due to debut later). Rumors ran rampant in



Art: José Luis García-López

the comics industry and mainstream public; this wasn't just any hero, this was *everybody's* hero.

A major incident that occurred during the well-hyped death was the sharp price increase the Superman line went through soon after arriving on store shelves. With speculators everywhere, comics collecting has taken a new turn toward Wall Street-like investment. Carlin watched all this from the only place he could, the sidelines.

"Unfortunately, that is out of our control," he notes. "We can say, 'Hey, don't do that.' What we put on the corner is a suggested retail price. For five or six years, nobody complained that the stores were selling *Superman* for a quarter less than cover price the week after it came out. Unfortunately, some people took advantage of the situation. I don't know if that's good or bad, I just think that that's sometimes the way it is—you charge what people will pay.

"We tried to cover it from our side, by making sure that there were plenty of printings out there and an affordable collected version of the whole story, which also did very well. We tried to make sure people who wanted the story could get it *without* being ripped off. At the same time, we don't decide what the collectors' prices are, the stores don't decide them, the people who pay decide. If a store puts up a comic book for $75 and nobody buys it, it will be $60 before you know it. If nobody buys it then, it'll be $30. I hate to say it this way, but in a way the people who were hurt are the people who caused it.

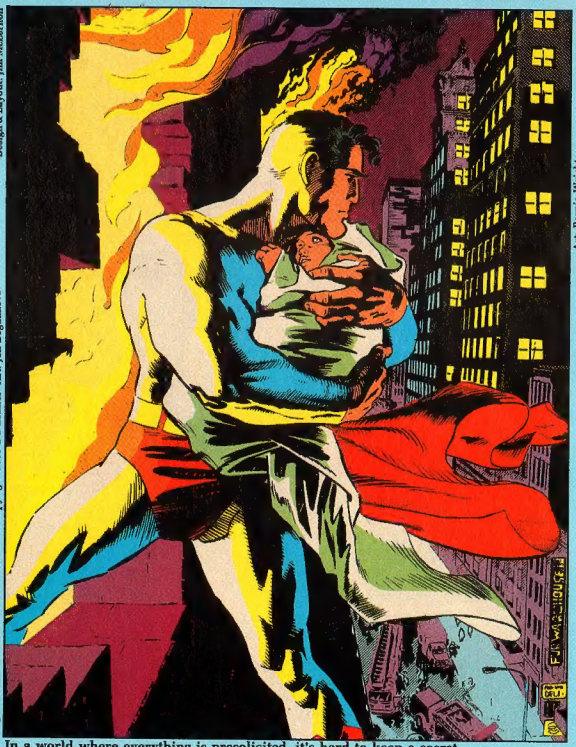
"If I was running a store and had regular customers, they would all be able to put in their orders weeks before for this certain comic book. I would make sure that they were all satisfied, and I wouldn't send them away. But, for people who walk in off the street, if they're willing to pay $10 or $20, I don't know what I would do until I got there. I try to stay out of situations like that. I've paid a lot of money for comics, and I've paid a lot for a CD I wanted that was imported from somewhere. You pay what you think it's worth, it's the same for everybody. People pay a hell of a lot more for baseball cards, and you don't even get 22 pages with those," Carlin laughs, but "it's a touchy subject and I certainly don't have any answers for it. It's, unfortunately, what the marketplace is about.

Art: Bernie Wrightson

"We tried to make sure people who wanted the story could get it *without* being ripped off," Mike Carlin says.

"I walked into comic stores where people said, 'Why didn't you tell me you were going to be on *Entertainment Tonight*, I would have ordered more comics.' It's like, 'Hey, I didn't know I was going to be on *Entertainment Tonight* until yesterday.' So they don't really see how out of control it really is. That's unfortunate," he comments.

"I'm torn about [the multi-purchasing and collectibility], because we've always been proud about—especially here at DC and Superman in general—the people who buy them; our regular sales were showing that they were being *read* by people. There were no double purchases, no multi-baggers and none of that stuff. That's all well and good," says Mike Carlin. "At the same time, these guys—the guys who write and draw the books—their income is based on what it sells. If you can sell twice as many and make them more money, and it's still read by the same people who are reading it anyway, they win."



Design & Layout: Jim McLarnon

Superman Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 DC Comics Art: Jon Bogdanove

In a world where everything is presolicited, it's hard to keep a secret.

Those offbeat elementals are getting polished up for action.

THE LOST METAL MEN TAPES

BY KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

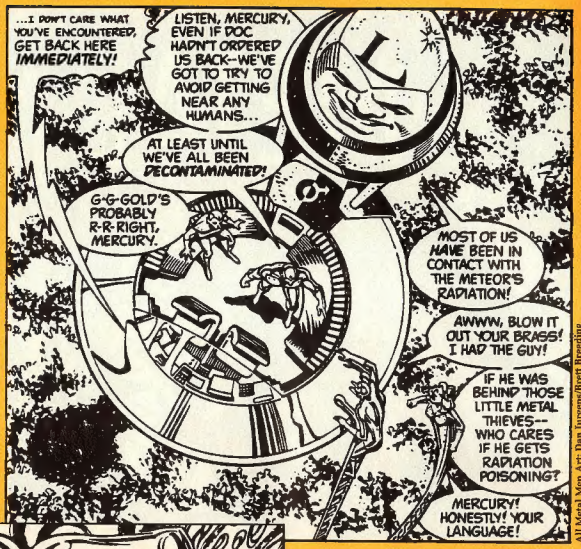
Metal Men Art & Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1987, 1991, 1993 DC Comics Inc.

It may have survived crises, wars and even armageddon, but is the DC Universe ready for the *Metal Men*? Mike Carlin and Dan Jurgens think the answer is yes, and they're reviving what may be DC's most peculiar characters in a four-issue mini-series out this fall.

Comics' original "elementals," six robots created by the enigmatic Doc Magnus, have been very seldom seen since their title's most recent revival nearly 16 years ago. Still, Carlin says they have a strong appeal to many Silver Age fans, including himself.

"They've always been a favorite of mine, and I know many pros feel the same way about them. I think it's because their tone is so different, compared to all the other DC and Marvel heroes. When we started this project, we thought there was a chance of tapping into fans who like some of the more humorous stuff," says Carlin. "At the same time, it's a pretty straightforward adventure story."

Despite the trend in recent years toward darker, grittier characters, Carlin says the Metal Men haven't strayed from their original concept.


...I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED, GET BACK HERE IMMEDIATELY!
LISTEN, MERCURY, EVEN IF DOC HADN'T ORDERED US BACK--WE'VE GOT TO TRY TO AVOID GETTING NEAR ANY HUMANS...
AT LEAST UNTIL WE'VE ALL BEEN DECONTAMINATED!
G-G-GOLD'S PROBABLY R-R-RIGHT, MERCURY.
MOST OF US HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE METEOR'S RADIATION!
AWWW, BLOW IT OUT YOUR BRASS! I HAD THE GUY!
IF HE WAS BEHIND THOSE LITTLE METAL THIEVES--WHO CARES IF HE GETS RADIATION POISONING?
MERCURY! HONESTLY! YOUR LANGUAGE!

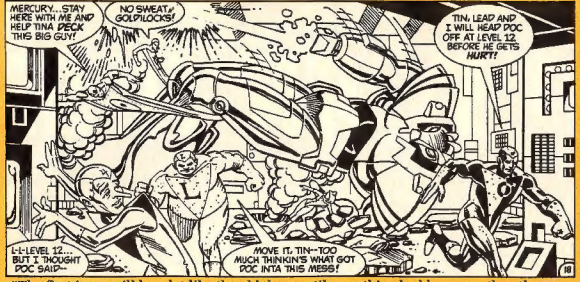
All Metal Men Art: Dan Jurgens/Brett Breeding

"We're going to point [Doc Magnus] in a totally new direction," Mike Carlin explains.

"It's not a re-start, it's not a revamp in the negative sense. We definitely raise the stakes in this series. There's a new development that harks back to their origins that we never found out about, so what we're doing is selling you 'the lost *Metal Men* tapes.' We're showing you the days before the Metal Men's first appearance in *Showcase* in the hopes of adding to the legend, and maybe explaining Will Magnus' schizophrenic personality over the years. He has been a happy guy, a crazy guy, a mad guy, a bad guy, and I think we've come up with a good explanation for *why* he does that," reveals Carlin, who says Magnus will be consistent with later DC appearances.

Although Jurgens had been working under Carlin's editorship on *Superman*, he says their collaboration on *Metal Men* actually predates that.

NOBODY ASKED YOU, GOLD!
DOC, DON'T YOU SEE YOU'RE KILLING US KEEPING US COUPED UP IN--
TINA... I AM NOT LETTING A SINGLE ONE OF YOU OUT OF THIS COMPLEX...
...AND THAT'S FINAL!


MERCURY... STAY HERE WITH ME AND HELP TINA BREAK THIS BIG GUY!
NO SWEAT, GOLDILOCKS!
TIN, LEAD AND I WILL HEAD DOC OFF AT LEVEL 12 BEFORE HE GETS HURT!
L-LEVEL 12... BUT I THOUGHT DOC SAID--
MOVE IT, TIN--TOO MUCH THINKIN'S WHAT GOT DOC INTA THIS MESS!

"The first issue will be a lot like the old days until something bad happens, then the whole series' tone shifts," Carlin notes.

"I wanted to work on something visually different, and there's nothing like them in comics. When I saw the *Metal Men* as a kid, the neatest thing was that there were six 'people,' different colors, that could stretch and move—they were real fluid—and there was *nothing* like them," says Jurgens.

Like Jurgens, Carlin says he was always a fan of the six robotic heroes—Gold, Tin, Lead, Iron, Mercury and Platinum.

"I loved the old series, I think, because they had such distinct personalities. Even though they were a little too two-dimensional, they were very broad, and I responded to that, because there wasn't much stuff like that in comics. Marvel Comics back then were a bit deeper and heavier, and granted, the rest of DC characters were a little cardboard, but these six characters really ran the gamut. *Metal Men* was a lot of fun to read. And, it has actually turned out to be more fun to write," Carlin says.

The Metal Men are among the most popular DC characters not yet subject to a revival. Still, their appearances in the past dozen years have been exceedingly rare, which puzzles Carlin.

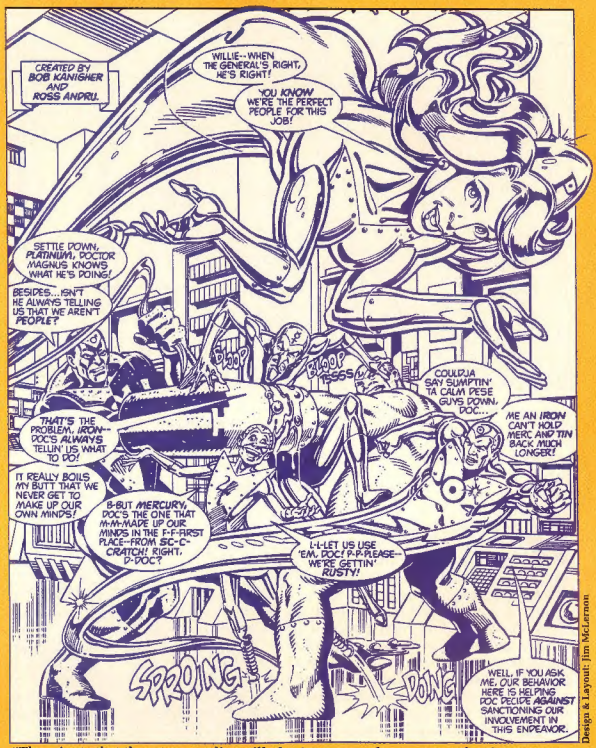
"I don't know why—I don't know what DC was thinking before I got there," he says. "But I fear that the Metal Men may have been a little too silly for some people, and as comics have been getting more and more serious in recent years, they would be the last guys to be revitalized—which is also part of the fun for me!"

Originally, the Metal Men were destroyed and re-constructed on a fairly regular basis, but Carlin says there will be some changes in that process: "It's a little schizophrenic—much like Magnus' personality has been. It's definitely going to be light in terms of the banter. The first issue, in particular, will be a lot like the old days, until something bad happens, then the whole series' tone shifts. Hopefully, it'll make them more interesting characters, and more—this sounds weird—more realistic, in terms of mortality.

"There didn't seem to be any reason to care if the Metal Men survived or got damaged in an adventure, because they could just build new ones. This time it will be *different*."

Artwork on *Metal Men* will be "wide open," according to Jurgens. "The thing about the Metal Men is that they're all different colors, but it's one solid color—and it makes for a very colorful book. If all six are there, and they're going into action, and they're twirling and swirling and moving around each other, all you need is the color. They move right across the page. The minute that they stop stand-

(continued on page 72)


CREATED BY BOB KANIGHER AND ROSS ANDRU.
WILLIE--WHEN THE GENERAL'S RIGHT, HE'S RIGHT!
YOU KNOW WE'RE THE PERFECT PEOPLE FOR THIS JOB!
SETTLE DOWN, PLATINUM, DOCTOR MAGNUS KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
BESIDES... ISN'T HE ALWAYS TELLING US THAT WE AREN'T PEOPLE?
BLOOP!
BLOOP! BLOOP!
COULDJA SAY SUMPTIN' TA CALM DESE GUYS DOWN, DOC...
THAT'S THE PROBLEM, IRON--DOC'S ALWAYS TELLIN' US WHAT TO DO!
ME AN IRON CAN'T HOLD MERC AND TIN BACK MUCH LONGER!
IT REALLY BOILS MY BUTT THAT WE NEVER GET TO MAKE UP OUR OWN MINDS!
B-BUT MERCURY, DOC'S THE ONE THAT M-M-MADE UP OUR MINDS IN THE F-F-FIRST PLACE--FROM SC-C-CRATCH! RIGHT, D-DOC?
L-LET US USE 'EM, DOC! P-P-PLEASE WE'RE GETTIN' RUSTY!
SPRONG
PONG
WELL, IF YOU ASK ME, OUR BEHAVIOR HERE IS HELPING DOC DECIDE AGAINST SANCTIONING OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THIS ENDEAVOR.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

"DESTROYED FOREVER?"
WHAT D'YA MEAN, "DESTROYED FOREVER!?"
I'VE RISKED THE CHANCE OF YOU ALL BEING DESTROYED FOREVER TOO MANY TIMES ALREADY!

"The minute that they stop standing still, they're not people anymore—they become human ribbons," says Dan Jurgens.

ABLE TO SOAR HIGH

By DAN SCAPPEROTTI

It's Superman! Kirk Alyn!

Photo: Richard Todd

As both Superman and Blackhawk, Kirk Alyn winged his way through serial adventure.

Once, long ago, he was the Man of Steel, the very picture of a superhero. But that time has past. Those were brief moments in his career as a hero.

It was during the late '40s and early 1950s that Kirk Alyn garnered a fame which escaped most actors who labored in the B units of the Hollywood studios. When the actor won the role of Superman, it seemed like a plum assignment that would lead to better recognition. Fame came but unfortunately, this sword had a double edge, and one that cut.

Between 1930 and 1943, Alyn had been busy treading the boards of New York's legitimate stage, appearing in night club and theater revues. And when the war broke out, the young actor was classified 1A by Uncle Sam's draft board.

At the time, he was working at the Versailles Club until 4 a.m. because that was the legal deadline for serving drinks. By 8 a.m, Alyn had to be at an NBC studio for his role in the popular radio soap opera *Portia Faces Life*.

Feeling the military draft breathing down his neck, Alyn decided it was time for a change. "I was very tired," he remembers. "I had lost a lot of weight working at the Versailles and doing the radio show for six months. I was getting weak and didn't want to go into the service tired. I asked to be replaced on *Portia* and went to California."

He had decided to just lay in the sun at Santa Monica for a couple of months while reviewing his options. Arriving in California, Alyn checked into a hotel and called Red Skelton. "Red was a buddy of mine from New York before anyone knew Red Skelton. He had a house in the San Fernando Valley. He asked me where I was staying and when I told him, he told me I was coming out and staying with him. And he wouldn't take any arguments. He drove out and picked me up."

Although Alyn had once held a brief job at the Paramount Theater in Los Angeles, he had never had a real chance to see Hollywood. Skelton loaned him a car and Alyn drove into Hollywood. "It was beautiful then, a lovely town," Alyn remembers. "Nine o'clock at night, you could shoot a gun down Hollywood Boulevard and there wouldn't be anyone on the street. Now, it's Halloween every night, all night long. I was walking down the street and coming toward me was a tall, good-looking blonde who looked familiar. She recognized me, and I realized that she was one of the girls who had been in the last show I had done with Imogene Coca. We started talking and she said that she wanted me to meet her uncle."

As it turned out, the uncle was the producer and director of a show scheduled to open in San Francisco. "He kept looking at me," recalls Alyn, "Finally, he says, 'He'll be perfect for the part.' Now, I had come out here for a rest, but as soon as he offered me a job, I took it."

The show ran for 10 weeks and then Alyn returned to Hollywood where a friend introduced him to his agent. The first of several studios the agent approached with his new client was Republic Pictures. At 7 p.m. the same evening, a studio representative called the actor.

"They asked me if I was a quick study. I said yes, and if it's not more than 50 sides [i.e. different speeches], I'll know it by tomorrow. As a leading man in a stock company, I had to

ER THAN ANY BIRD

Alyn portrayed two classic comic heroes on the serial screen: Superman & Blackhawk

Superman Photos. Trademark & Copyright 1948 DC Comics/Columbia Pictures

learn a whole damned show in two days. He told me, there would only be two sides. The actor scheduled for the role had come down with appendicitis and had been rushed to the hospital. Could I be ready at 5 a.m.?"

Early the next day, Alyn found himself on the set of his first feature, *Overland Mail Robbery* with "Wild Bill" Elliott and George "Gabby" Hayes. Alyn played Tom Hartley, a young man from Boston thrust into a battle with a gang of stage robbers. With Wild Bill's help, he overcomes his fears and becomes a man.

"I was the guy who marries the girl at the end. Every time someone got shot, I fainted. I was supposed to be scared as I came into town riding on the top of a stagecoach. The fact is I *really* was scared. Bill Elliott was great and always wanted to do something for me. Gabby Hayes, who was also from the stage, was very helpful. They had a lot of fun with me on that picture."

Although he was listed 1A in the draft, Alyn was finding it hard to enlist since the services' ranks were temporarily filled. He accompanied his then-wife, comedienne/singer Virginia O'Brien, to Catalina Island where she was doing a show. There, he happened to see a familiar face in a uniform—the gateman from Republic Studios who was now in the Navy. The pair chatted and Alyn asked if he could get into that Naval unit. The gateman was sure he could and the next day Alyn was called down for a physical.

Superman, Blackhawk Characters. Trademark & Copyright 1948, 1950, 1952, 1989 DC Comics, Inc

"Everything was all right although I had to have a gold tooth taken out. I waited just a couple of days and I went in the service. I was sent over to the Island, and although boot camp was usually four weeks, I spent eight weeks in an advanced unit."

O'Brien was under contract to MGM at the time and Louis B. Mayer gave a party to which his contract staff was invited. "Thankfully, it was after I was allowed to put on my blues. Up until then, I could only wear my boot camp outfit. Although I had on the blues, I had no insignia or stripes of any kind. Bobby Stack, with a drink in his hand, came over to me and said, 'Hi, sailor. How come no stripes?' I'm stuttering and I don't know what to say when suddenly it dawns on me that there is a blackout when ships come in and no one is allowed to wear anything that will give away what ships are in the harbor. Stack looks at me and says, 'Oh, you must be on one of those islands in the Pacific.' What a break!"

Following the war, Alyn found himself again at the gates of Republic Studios. In the first of his six serials, the 12-chapter *Daughter of Don Q* directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet, Alyn starred as Cliff Roberts with Adrian Booth as the title character Dolores Quantaro. Alyn encored with *Federal Agents vs. Underworld Inc.* in

BlackHawk Poster: Copyright 1952 Columbia Pictures/Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

1949 and *Radar Patrol vs. Spy King* a year later, both directed by Fred C. Brannon.

"Freddy Brannon was a prop man at Republic," explains Alyn, "and they made a director out of him, but he didn't know much about directing. On the other hand, Spencer Bennet was an old pro who had directed Pearl White, the star of several silent serials. Spence was a fine director who knew serials backwards and forwards better than anybody.

"*Daughter of Don Q* was the best of the three at Republic," claims Alyn. "As far as acting goes, I was basically a detective in all of them."

He fondly remembers one incident in *Don Q* where he turned the tables on a heckling Adrian Booth. Cliff and Dolores are hot in pursuit of the bad guys as they drive off in a canvas-covered truck. The high-speed chase roars along a mountain highway. Rounding a bend, one heavy releases the canvas which flies back and covers Cliff's car. The vehicle careens out of control and plunges over a cliff towards certain doom in a lake below.

"Now, I know from the script that we have to swim out of that lake at some point," Alyn says. "I kept wondering when we were going to shoot that scene. I asked the director, Spence Bennet, if we were going to shoot it at a lake, and he told me that we would film it on the backlot pool and that we had to wait until they heated the pool. I kept thinking that there was no way they could heat up that pool. Well, it was the last day of shooting and Bennet takes us to the backlot. He explains that we have to dive into the pool and stay under as long as we can so all the surface ripples go away and we can come up in a smooth surface.

"Mind you that this is January or February and the water is *cold*. The time comes for the shot and they have dressing rooms warmed up for Adrian and I with a bottle of brandy and a person in each to rub us down after the scene. I get very suspicious, thinking that if the water is warm, what's all this for? I asked one of the stage hands to get a hose and wet me down before I got into the water. Adrian looks over at me and says, 'Ha, ha, ha. Look at the sissy getting wet down before he goes in the water. I'm just going to dive in!'

"I was all wet to take the edge off the cold plunge. We dove into the water and I stayed down as long as I possibly could and when I came up, I heard the darndest language and words I ever heard coming out of a woman. She was swearing like *mad*! That water was like ice. She came over and apologized to me. The director told Adrian that we would have to do another take because there may be lip readers in the audience and they'll know what she was saying. So, we had to shoot it again."

In 1948, Kirk Alyn won the role of Superman in the serial produced by Sam Katzman and its sequel *Atom Man vs. Superman* (both of which he discussed at great length in STARLOG #20). The assignment led to a meeting with the character's creators. "I know Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster very well," Alyn notes. "I still call them once in a while. Jerry Siegel had a heart attack last year. He was very bad and he still doesn't see people because he's very weak. I met them when I did the first Superman serial. I went to Forry Ackerman's house and met them there. Forry had me give a talk to his friends one night about Superman. Jerry sent me a nice letter thanking me for the talk and said how much he enjoyed it."

As a career move, *Superman* was a disaster for the actor. He was typecast by producers and film work dried up. Following the second serial, Alyn was having lunch with producer Sam Katzman. "I told him I had to go back to New York because he had ruined my career and I *couldn't* get another job in Hollywood because I did this damned *Superman*. Katzman asked, 'Who won't hire you? You can work in the *next* picture I do.' I thought, 'Yeah, you say that now, but wait until the next picture comes up.' I waited a couple of months and he called and asked if I still wanted to be in the picture, and it's *Blackhawk*," Alyn laughs.

When he first appeared in the August 1941 issue of *Military Comics*, Blackhawk was a creation for wartime America, battling the Nazis and later the Communists during the Korean War. A seven-man team eventually evolved, a group that would leap into their sleek planes at a moment's notice to battle malefactors wherever they found them: the leader Blackhawk himself, Hendrickson, an anti-Nazi German weapons expert,

As usual, Alyn went to the source for his portrayal of Blackhawk.

Superman vs. Atom Man Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1950 DC Comics/Columbia Pictures

Chuck the American communications man, Andre the Frenchman, the Swede Olaf, the Pole Stanislaus and Chop-Chop the Chinese cook whose only weapon was a meat cleaver.

Blackhawk was the last comic book Columbia adapted for the serial screen. The plot involved the machinations of the Mysterious Leader of a gang of spies and enemy saboteurs. His chief henchman is Laska, played by Carol Forman who had been the evil Spider Lady in *Superman* and Alyn's nemesis Nila in *Federal Agents vs. Underworld Inc.*

"I didn't know from *Blackhawk* so I asked, 'What's that?' Katzman says it's a comic book! So, I ran out and got the comic books real quick and read them. I went down and signed the contracts. I got the comics to see what this guy looked like. The costume we used was a very light wool and it looked very nice. It was blue in the comics but our costumes were brown with the yellow insignia because it filmed better in black and white.

"Blackhawk was originally a volunteer flyer before America got into World War II," Alyn explains. "We were sent to England where we met the guys from Hungary, Yugoslavia and France. After the war, we came back to fight crime in America. We decided to call ourselves the Blackhawks after me. I was George Blackhawk."

Alyn points with pride to the fact that Blackhawk and his men avoided guns, depending instead on their fists to subdue enemy racketeers. He is totally underwhelmed by the he-men of today's screens. "*Heroes?*" he exclaims. "Sylvester Stallone? All he does is take off his shirt, they oil him up a little bit, he gets a machine gun and shoots everybody. This *isn't* a hero. These are bad guys killing people. Look at *Blackhawk*. They *never* used guns. They had people come at them with guns and they got

The actor soon became frustrated by the typecasting that came with Superman.

Superman vs. Atom Man Photo: Courtesy Warner Home Video

Blackhawk Photos: Copyright 1952 Columbia Pictures

After Clark (Alyn) and Lois (Noel Neill) finished their confrontations with Lex Luthor (Lyle Talbot), hero and villain would trade cabbage recipes.

***Superman* serial producer Sam Katzman offered Alyn an escape from the bonds of the Man of Steel: *Blackhawk*.**

out of it. They beat the hell out of the bad guys, but they didn't kill anybody."

For his interpretation of the role, Alyn went right to the comics. "How we interacted with each other I took from the comic books. When they gave me the script, they were surprised that I knew about the character and his motivation. However, Sam Katzman wasn't surprised because he knew that I had used the comic books for reference on Superman."

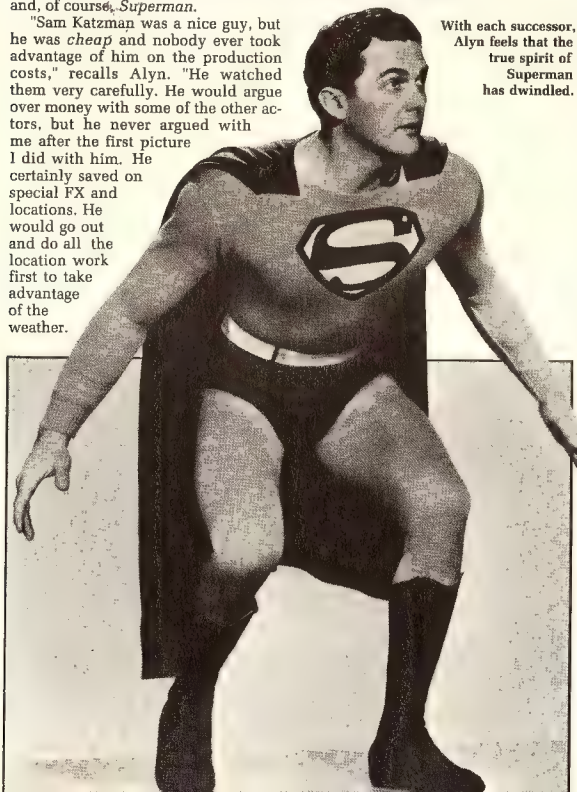
Katzman was the king of low-budget films. He could crank out a feature based on a major news story and have it in theaters before it was off the front page. Katzman took over the serial unit at Columbia Pictures in 1945, producing all of that studio's serials until the form's demise in 1956. Like Universal in the 1930s, Katzman tapped comic books and comic strips for many of his serials. Included in the Katzman canon are *Batman, Brenda Starr, Hop Harrigan, The Vigilante, Brick Bradford, Congo Bill* and, of course, *Superman.*

"Sam Katzman was a nice guy, but he was *cheap* and nobody ever took advantage of him on the production costs," recalls Alyn. "He watched them very carefully. He would argue over money with some of the other actors, but he never argued with me after the first picture I did with him. He certainly saved on special FX and locations. He would go out and do all the location work first to take advantage of the weather.

"I never used a telephone booth in *Superman* because Sam thought it would cost too much to have it moved around," Alyn explains wryly. "So, I would land behind something and come out dressed as Clark Kent or I would duck into the store room at the *Daily Planet* and come out as Superman. Sam watched *pennies.*"

The animated scenes in the two Superman serials have been the subject of much fan criticism. The Man of Steel doesn't fly in these movies as a *live-action* character; rather, he transforms into a cartoon, flies, then reverts to Alyn. Not only were the flying scenes done via animation, but the bullets bouncing off the Man of Steel's chest and other superfeats were also created by an artist's pen. Alyn feels that Katzman "could have done a better job on the animation. That's where he was *really* chintzy. It turned out pretty good, but he could have made it look more like me and he could have gotten Superman in closer."

The actor remembers his Lois Lane, Noel Neill, as nice to work with although she was quiet. "She would forget her lines once in a while and the director would scream because the old man [Katzman] was watching any retakes."



With each successor, Alyn feels that the true spirit of Superman has dwindled.

Alyn recalls an incident on the cave set of *Atom Man vs. Superman* where he, as Superman, confronts Lex Luthor, played by Lyle Talbot. "Lyle Talbot was a fine actor with a great sense of humor. He and I were doing a scene where he was going to shoot me and threatening to send me into the Empty Doom. We're arguing back and forth and the director calls cut while they adjusted the lights. During the break, I'm telling Lyle how to make stuffed cabbage. They start the cameras rolling again, but there is still a shadow on my face. So again, Spence calls a break. Lyle and I pick up our conversation. The director sees us talking every time the cameras stop and comes over to see what we're talking about. I said, 'Well, Spence, I'm a good cook and Lyle is a good cook and I'm just showing him how to make stuffed cabbage.' Well, Spence just threw up his hands and said, 'Here I have a superhero and a vicious villain and you're talking about making stuffed cabbage!' "

As part of the celebration of Superman's 50th anniversary, Warner Bros. released the two serials on videotape, the first time they were officially shown to the public since their initial release. "They used my own films to put the serials on tape," says Alyn. "I don't have them anymore because I sold them, but I had brand spanking new prints."

Alyn doesn't have a preference for either the late George Reeves or Christopher Reeve's interpretation of the character. "I know that Christopher Reeve is a fine actor," remarks Alyn, "but I don't think the movies' writers had any conception of what Superman was. They did a lot of sensational things. They updated him. I think each picture is worse than the one before, and now the guy [Reeve] can't get a job."

He doesn't feel that television has done justice to the Man of Steel either. "I turned down the role of Superman on TV twice," Alyn reveals. "Once after the series was on the air a couple of years. They didn't want to pay any money, the stories were so bad and the direction wasn't very good.

"I saw the new *Superboy* TV show and it was *very* bad because he [John Haymes-Newton] had no idea who Superboy was. Now I understand that they've improved them."

What does Kirk Alyn think in general of today's movie heroes? He smiles. "There *aren't* any," he says. "Name one."

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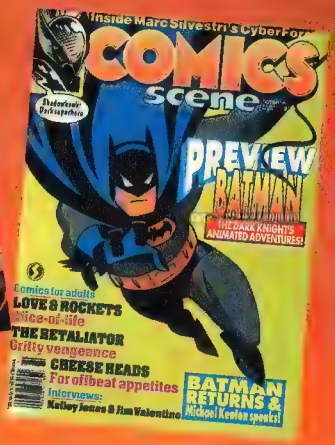

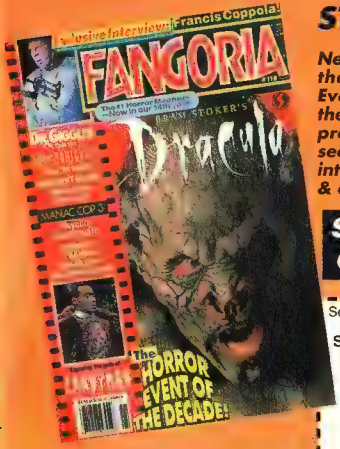

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THE GHOST IN BRONZE

By RYERSON JOHNSON

What name would you give to a man with the astute deductive ability of Sherlock Holmes, the strength of Samson, the agility of Tarzan of the Apes, the scientific mind of Albert Einstein and the virtue of Jesus Christ—a man who looks human, acts human, but who is just a...little...bit...more?

Lester Dent called him Doc Savage.

Between 1933 and 1949, the newsstands of the United States and Canada flashed the flamboyant covers of 181 issues of the monthly *Doc Savage Magazine*, which recorded the world-wide crime-solving exploits of this memorable character.

Most of these book-length novels were written by an ex-telegraph operator from Oklahoma named Lester Dent (see page 28). Les was a close friend of mine. We were both living in New York City, where we were active members of the American Fiction Guild, an organization founded in large part by that prolific pulpster, Arthur Burks, and dedicated to furthering the social and economic life of pulp magazine writers. (I was writing Westerns then.)

Fifty years ago, Ryerson "Johnny" Johnson became one of the Savage ghosts.

One day at a Fiction Guild luncheon in fall 1934, Les asked me if I would like to ghost a *Doc* for him. (In the professional writing world, a "ghost" is someone who writes something for someone else. The "someone else" gets credit for writing the piece, and the ghost gets an agreed-upon part of the money.)

In this instance, Les said he was tired of writing these whang-bang melodramatic 60,000-word magazine novels every month. He wanted to buy

himself some time to write for the book and slick magazine market.

"I'll give you the plot germ," he said. "You take it from there."

The story premise was this: A mysterious race of people live under the ice at the North Pole...and one of their number, a nefarious character (we named him Ool), escapes into the outside world carrying with him the secret of "cold light," or luminescence. The malevolent Ool means no good for his own people or for anyone else...and Doc Savage goes to the rescue.

I had never done any ghosting, but this sounded intriguing. I worked out specifics in the conflict and did a chapter outline. Dent—and John

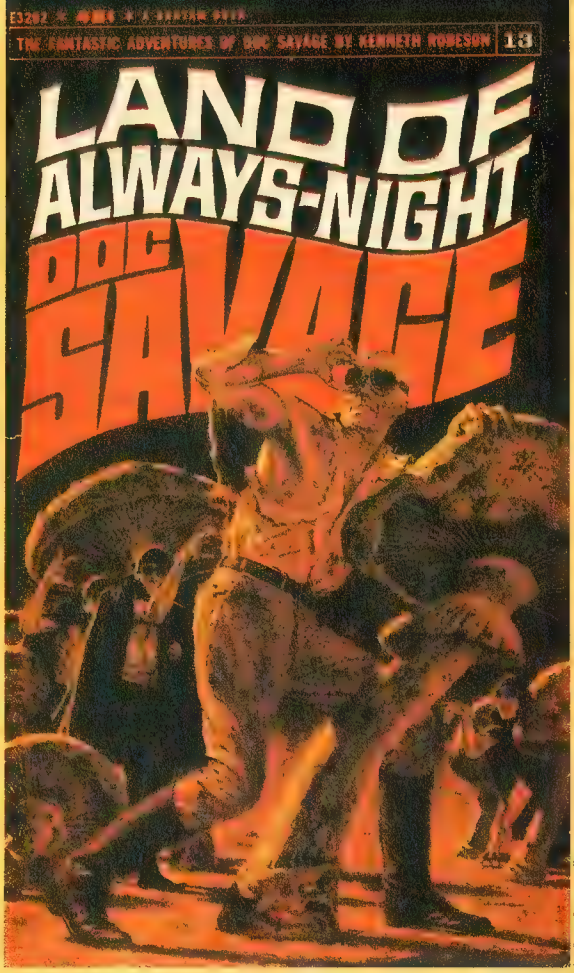
Art: James Bama

***The Fantastic Island*, Johnson's second ghosting, pitted Doc Savage against monstrous iguanas. It was really "some clever trick."**

Nanovic, the *Doc Savage* editor at Street & Smith Publishing Co.—OKed it, and I started typing, trying to hold it to Dent's pace and writing style.

It was a somewhat arduous chore at the beginning. As Will Murray, COMICS SCENE writer, pulp historian and editor of *Duende, a Journal and Archive for PulpLore*, has it in *Duende #2*: "The problem Dent experiences with the Johnson novels boiled down to a marked dissimilarity between their writing styles. Ryerson Johnson, a meticulous writer, wrote in a rich, dense style that dwelt upon detail; while Dent affected a terse, brisk prose in which, once a detail was laid down, it was promptly forgotten in a torrent of action."

Action was the word. As Les told me, "Just blast it out. Get the action-flow and the plot down. I'll pretty it up afterwards. And remember, with Doc,



Art: James Bama All Covers: Bantum Books

Johnson's first effort was *Land of Always Night*. It took him about a month to write the 63,000-word yarn.

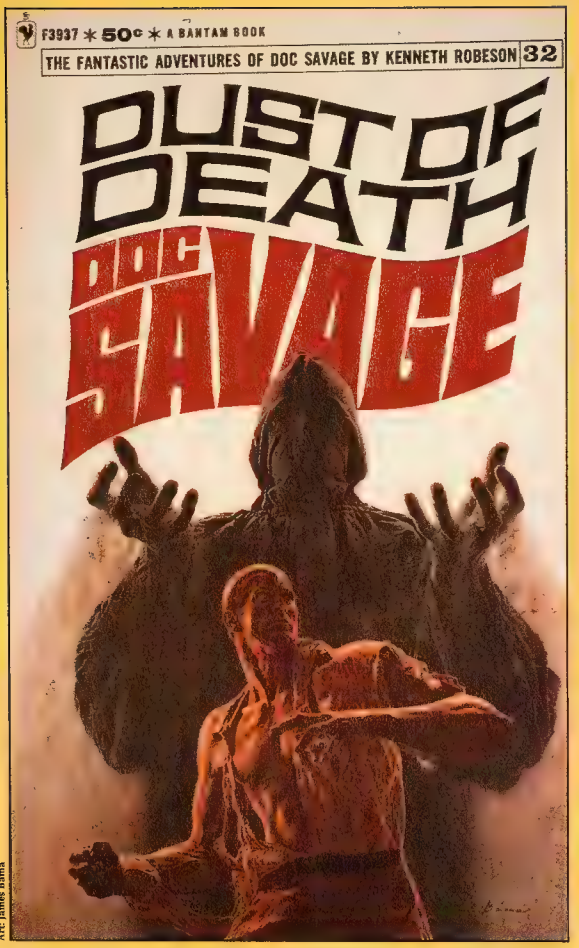
it isn't enough to have excitement; you have to have *action*. Quick shift of situations. Move it along. Using the same wordage, make it three fights instead of two."

I'm not a fast writer. I can rarely do gut-level writing where the words drip in a smooth flow out of your fingertips onto the typewriter keys, without conscious structure from your brain. I have to consciously structure every word I write, so it took me about a month to finish the 63,000-word yarn. Les wasn't impressed with my speed (he could have chopped it out in a week), but he liked the story all right.

For a working title, I used *The Malevolent Ool*. Les wasn't so keen about it, and I suggested *The Always-Night Land*. Les modified it to *The Land of Always Night*. He gave me $500 of the $750 he got from Street & Smith for the manuscript, and the story came out in the March 1935 issue of *Doc Savage Magazine*.

Since this was my first experience as an anonymous writer, I had the naive idea that I ought to do something to authenticate my involvement. What I did was spell my hometown back-

Art By & Copyright 1932 Joe DeVito Doc Savage: Trademark Conde Nast Publications, Inc.



Art: James Bama

Newspaperman Harold A. Davis ghosted *Dust of Death* and 12 other adventures.

wards. That "mysterious race of people living under the ice at the North Pole"—or was it the South Pole?—required a political governing body. I named it the Nonrevid—which is my Illinois hometown, Divernon, spelled backwards. Les thought it was pretty silly, but he grinned and went along with my whim.

I was the first one of Lester Dent's ghosts in bronze. There were others (see sidebar).

In all, there are, as far as is known, 31 ghostings. That leaves 149 for Dent—actually 150, because there was a mysterious missing manuscript. It's one of Dent's last *Doc Savage* novels, a change-of-pace from his usual output, a sophisticated piece with the title *In Hell, Madonna*, deriving from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. In 1949, Street & Smith discontinued publishing *Doc Savage Magazine* before the novel was printed. Some 30 years later, the manuscript, finally rediscovered, was published by Bantam Books as *The Red Spider* (1979).

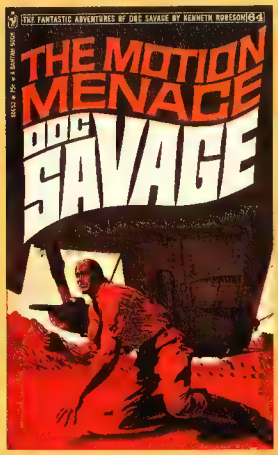
Other pulps didn't last much longer. Within a few years of the time a TV set became an established part of American homes, not only *Doc Savage*, but nearly the whole pulp magazine business drifted off into oblivion.

It wasn't only the *Doc Savage* ghosts who were relegated to obscurity. In a way, Lester Dent himself was a ghost, being required to print his novels under the "house name" of Kenneth Robeson.

The way I heard it, the Doc Savage character was dreamed up by Street & Smith's vice president, Henry W. Ralston, and editor John Nanovic. But Les Dent had a very great deal to do with fleshing out the personality, not only of Doc, but of his five diverse, idiosyncratic, intrepid associates: Professor William Harper "Johnny" Littlejohn, archaeologist/geologist; Thomas J. "Long Tom" Roberts, electrical engineer; Colonel John "Renny" Renwick, another famed engineer; Theodore Marley "Ham" Brooks, lawyer; and Andrew Blodgett "Monk" Mayfair, who looked a little apish, but was a famed chemist. There was a pet ape named Chemistry associated with the group and a pet pig, Habeas Corpus, a true descendant of wily Missouri razorbacks.

Concerning the leader of this remarkable team, Les told me, "Make Doc slightly more than human. Not enough to make him freaky...it takes a delicate handling." Apparently, I handled that first ghosting job well enough that Les, soon afterwards, handed me a newspaper clipping and said, "How about another Doc based

Johnson's third job, *The Motion Menace*, didn't impress creator Lester Dent, who rewrote the novel, keeping only the title and premise.



Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

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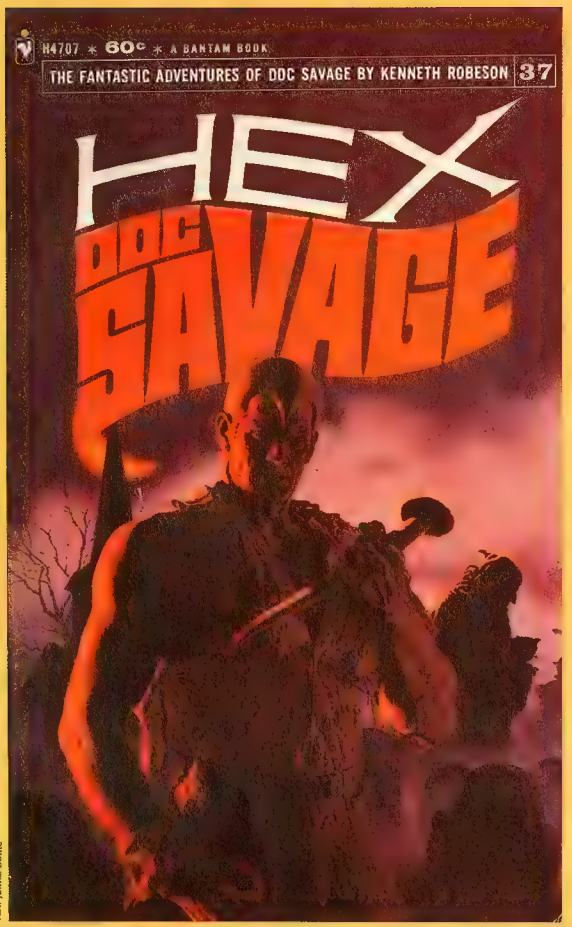
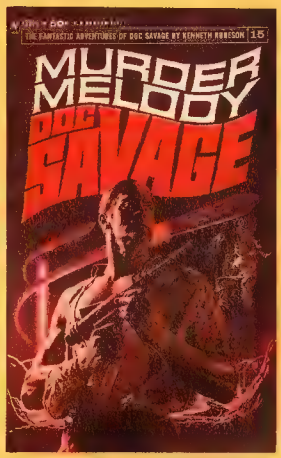


Art: James Bama

A job at Street & Smith as Assistant Editor of *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage* magazines led to William G. Bogart's ghost work.

Art: James Bama

Alan Hathway, another newspaperman, penned *The Devil's Playground* and three other Docs.



Art: James Bama

Laurence Donovan ghosted nine Docs including *Murder Melody*.

on this?"

The news story concerned a mysterious yacht and a "mad Baron" wrecked in the Galapagos Islands. Where do you get your plots? From anywhere and everywhere. Mostly out of your head, but sometimes stimulated by a news story. Street & Smith used to mail its writers a batch of news clips every month or so. I never did use one, but some writers found them to be a catalyst for a story plot. Now, I tossed the news story around in my mind, read up on the Galapagos Islands in the encyclopedia, and did a chapter outline, working from the premise of a mad scientist; the Count Ramadanoff, as I recall, who had discovered an incalculable wealth of diamonds deep in the volcanic rock, and who installed false directional signals to cause boats to wreck on his islands. Survivors from the boat wrecks were enslaved to work in his diamond mine...Doc to the rescue! Dent OKed the outline and sent it to editor Nanovic.

In all the superhero novels, there had to be complicated "escape scenes." By this time in my writing life, I had become impatient with working out detailed outlines—many of them you never followed anyway. So, at the escape places in the outline, I simply wrote, "Doc escapes by some clever trick." Dent felt the same way I did about it, so I even shorthanded it by using Dent's term for some clever trick—SCT. Nanovic accepted the plotline, but grumbled, "The tricks *better* be clever."

On one of the SCTs, I nearly outtricked myself. I had Doc's beautiful (and intelligent) cousin, Pat Savage, a prisoner in the mad Count's castle. She

was terrifyingly viewing a Galapagos iguana through a window glass that, unknown to her—and at that place in the story, unknown to the reader—was a magnifying glass. Through the glass, the red-eyed salivating creature loomed like a prehistoric monster, barring her escape.

Iguanas don't grow that large, of course, and the time came when I had to face this moment of truth with the reader. My SCT paid off with not one house-high monster, but a courtyard full of little yard-long hunger-crazed monsters. Carrying cousin Pat, Doc

Art: Boris Vallejo

Bogart eventually became the most prolific ghost, collaborating with Dent on *World's Fair Goblin* and producing 13 other novels.

escapes by leaping from one open-mouthed creature to another, hop-skipping on their backs. I don't know, maybe I got the idea from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ...Eliza running ahead of the hounds, saving herself by crossing the river on a chain of surging slabs of ice.

I was more familiar with Les Dent's writing style now, and working around the clock, I finished the novel in three weeks—a record for me. Les still wasn't impressed. At one point, in fact, in his impatience to have it finished, he came ashore in Florida from his treasure-hunting boat, the *Albatross*, and sent me a telegram that said: "Where the—Western Union says heck—is the copy?"

The title I suggested for my second ghosting was *Gems of Jeopardy*. Les changed it to *The Fantastic Island*. I was holed up in a rooming house at the time, acquainting myself with the New York City territory around 12th Street. Les came back from his treasure-hunting trip, and met me at the corner of 14th Street and Fifth Avenue early in the morning before the banks opened, crammed $500 cash in my hands, and we headed West in his LaSalle convertible.

"Remember," he said, "if we get robbed, I paid you."

He was headed back for a visit to his hometown, LaPlata, Missouri, and he was going to drop me off at my

OTHER GHOSTS

All told, five writers ghosted Doc Savage. The very first was Harold A. Davis (1902-1955), a newspaperman Lester Dent knew from his *Tulsa World* days. When Davis came East in 1933, he was put to work ghosting Doc so Dent could script a syndicated Doc Savage radio program. Davis' Docs included *The King Maker*, *Dust of Death*, *The Land of Fear*, *The Golden Peril*, *The Living Fire Menace*, *The Mountain Monster*, *The Munitions Master*, *The Green Death*, *Merchants of Disaster*, *The Crimson Serpent*, *The Purple Dragon*, *Devils of the Deep* and *The Exploding Lake*. Many were revised by Dent, who was seldom satisfied with his ghosts' work.

Davis fell out of fiction when he was hired as Managing Editor for the fledgling *Newsday* in 1940. He was replaced by pugnacious fellow newspaperman Alan Hathway (1906-1977), who did four Docs, *The Devil's Playground*, *The Headless Men*, *The Mindless Monsters* and *The Rustling Death*, before replacing Davis at *Newsday*. *Newsday* went on to win a Pulitzer under Hathway.

There are those who say that Hathway and Davis often collaborated on their stories, which leads to the possibility that any given Doc written by one might contain the other's input. For example, Davis' *Crimson Serpent* and Hathway's *Devil's Playground* use an identical murder device.

By far the most prolific of the Kenneth Robeson ghosts was William G. Bogart (1903-1977). A balding, mild-mannered man, Bogart got his start as an assistant editor on *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*. He went freelance in 1938 after successfully collaborating with Dent on *World's Fair Goblin*. Bogart went on to ghost *Hex*, *The Angry Ghost*, *The Spotted Men*, *The Flying Goblin*, *Tunnel Terror*, *The Awful Dynasty*, *Bequest of Evil*, *The Magic Forest*, *Fire and Ice*, *Death in Little Houses*, *The Disappearing Lady*, *Target for Death* and *The Death Lady*.

Photo: Mammoth Detective/Copyright 1946 Ziff-Davis

"Like scores of other people," said ghost William G. Bogart (in a rare photo), "I always wanted to write."

One of the most mysterious ghosts was brought in by Street and Smith in 1935 to churn out Docs in anticipation that *Doc Savage* would be published twice a month. (It never was.) Laurence Donovan ghosted numerous pulp heroes, including the Skipper, the Whisperer, the Phantom Detective and the Black Bat—then vanished, leaving some doubt as to his true name. He is often confused with Norman A. Daniels, who wrote many of the same series, but *not* Doc Savage. Donovan's nine Docs include *Murder Melody*, *Murder Mirage*, *The Men Who Smiled No More*, *Haunted Ocean*, *The Black Spot*, *Cold Death*, *Land of Long Juju*,

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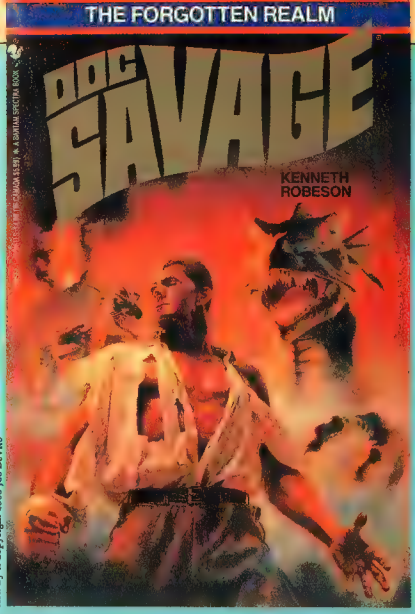
RYERSON JOHNSON, who divides his time between life in Hawaii and Maine, has been writing professionally since 1926. He has written for Argosy, Adventure, Western Story Magazine, *the* Encyclopedia Brittanica *and many others. As an editor, he worked on* The Spider, Detective Tales, Dime Mystery *and others. He is currently finishing a book about his hectic days of pulp writing,* We Don't Want It Good, We Want It Wednesday. *This memoir originally appeared in STARLOG #119.*



Art: By & Copyright 1993 Jon DeVito

The Forgotten Realm, the next new Savage yarn, is due out in November. Like the others written by Murray, it incorporates unused Dent material.

All Photos: Courtesy Will Murray

Today, writers Will Murray (left) and Philip José Farmer, both longtime fans, continue the Savage tradition. Farmer, in fact, is Savage's biographer.

Mad Eyes and *He Could Stop the World*.

A Christmas 1940 pay cut forced Dent to set free his remaining ghost, William Bogart. Dent had been negotiating with Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff (later to edit *Superman* and *Batman*, respectively) to collaborate on a Doc to be called "Dead Man's Club." Dent subsequently wrote *Birds of Death* from their plot.

For the next five years, Dent was the sole Doc novelist. But other writers continued to work on the Man of Bronze's adventures, primarily in Street & Smith's *Doc Savage Comics*. They include Carl Formes, who was responsible for transforming Doc into a superhero (complete with a magic ruby hood which gave the bronze man supernatural powers); Edward Gruskin, who scripted the superheroized Doc in comics and on radio; and Bruce Elliott, later to write Shadow novels.

When Dent began to itch to cut loose from the monthly *Doc Savage* chore, he turned again to Harold Davis and Bill Bogart. But only Bogart proved up to the task of writing the post-war *Doc Savage*. Dent hoped Bogart would write every Doc from 1947 on, but financial circumstances intervened. Then, *Doc* was cancelled.

Over the years, numerous writers attempted Docs, or declined the opportunity. They include screenwriter Richard B. Sale, SF giant Edmond Hamilton, *The Shadow*'s Walter B. Gibson and the bestselling John D. MacDonald (creator of Travis McGee). Two Dent secretaries, Martin Baker and Evelyn Coulson, are often mentioned as having taken a stab at it.

In the years following the heyday of Street & Smith, Doc often cropped up in comic book form. Superman writer Leo Dorfman scripted a Gold Key one-shot in 1966. When Marvel acquired the rights to Doc in the '70s, Steve Englehart, Tony Isabella, Gardner Fox and Doug Moench rotated the responsibility. For DC Comics, Denny O'Neil and Mike W. Barr brought the bronze hero into the '80s. The recent Millennium incarnation was handled by Mark Ellis, Terry Collins & others.

A 1985 NPR Doc radio show was scripted by Roger Rittner and Will Murray, who went on to write (to date) seven Docs from unfinished Lester Dent manuscripts for Bantam paperback publication—*Python Isle*, *White Eyes*, *The Frightened Fish*, *The Jade Ogre*, *Flight into Fear*, *The Whistling Wraith* and *The Forgotten Realm* (due out this fall). Other than Dent, the most celebrated Doc writer without question is Philip José Farmer, author of the fanciful biography *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*, who fulfilled a lifelong dream when he chronicled Doc's very first adventure in the Bantam novel *Escape From Loki*.

—Will Murray

hometown in Illinois. There weren't these super highways then, belting you around cities, and we went through Pittsburgh screaming like a fire engine.

Les was great for gadgets. He had a new four-tone horn on his convertible. A *loud* horn. It got out of kilter and four-toned us through the business district till Les, in total exasperation, grabbed a handful of wires and tore it loose from its connections.

Lester Dent went through high school and the Chillicothe Business College, and that was the size of it. He got his education, he claimed, by reading the dictionary. Words intrigued him. Although the content of pulp magazine stories was slanted to an adult audience, it was all supposed to be instantly understandable to a 12-year-old child. Les used words like "vouchsafed" and "importuned" for "said." Because his plots were so strong, the action fast and his imagination boundless, he got away with it.

Sometimes, I couldn't help thinking about him in terms of his heroic magazine character. A big man with a healthy lust for living. Genuine, not a phony pore in his body. Honest with himself and everybody else.

He smoked a pipe, but rarely except when typing. He bought his pipes by the dozen because he chewed the stems off. He was always on the watch for a harder-stem pipe. Nervous tension is a fiction writer's occupational hazard. You're the good guy, the bad

guy, the woman, the child. Back and forth in quick succession. And not just any man, woman, child—a specific one. You have to keep changing characters, and you have to be authentic. You can get very wound-up when doing fast, continuous writing.

No matter how incredible the characters and the situations, if your story is going to produce that "suspension of disbelief" in the reader, then you, the writer, have to believe in yourself—at least while you're writing. You pour yourself into it. It becomes your real world...and maybe you chew your pipe stems off.

When you're in the swing of writing

Art: James Bama

Hathway and Davis often collaborated on stories. Any given Doc credited to one may include the other's input.

a story, ideas joggle each other. They pile up—more good ideas than you need to use sometimes.

"Use 'em anyway," Les urged. "Crowd 'em in. It'll make a richer story. You can always think of more when the time comes."

Art: James Bama

Decades later, there's still some doubt as to Laurence Donovan's true name.

Lester Dent's basic formula for the action story—or perhaps, I have thought, for *any* story—was simple: You dream up a treasure—something so important that somebody is willing to kill to get it, and somebody else is willing to die in trying to defend it. Then, to use Les Dent's term, in the process of acquiring or protecting, you "pour on the grief." You make it so increasingly tough for the good guy that it seems he/she can never come out on top. But you've motivated something in your story—"planted" something somewhere—that makes a happy ending convincingly possible. The good guy, in a surprising way, wins.

He liked excitement, not only in his stories, but in real life. He bought an old Chesapeake Bay "bugeye" and taught himself to sail it. I was with him on a few shakedown cruises on Long Island Sound, before he sailed with his wife, Norma, for the first of his trips to the waters off Cuba to look for pirate treasure. He had maps, and he had every magnetic sounding device on the market. But he always came home cheerfully complaining that his exotic equipment never beeped anything more exciting than wet coconuts.

In between treasure-hunting jaunts, he kept turning out his *Doc Savage* novels, and in the end, he sold his boat and bought an airplane. Les was one of the first to make a cross-country trip—LaPlata, Missouri to Teterboro airport in New Jersey—in a small single-prop plane. He had a bad half-hour when he got fogged in at a Pennsylvania mountain valley, flying in circles looking for a way out.

Through it all, he kept his hand in at writing. He was moving into a more mature market: *Black Mask, Saturday*

Art: James Bama

Davis left fiction for fact, becoming Managing Editor of Long Island's brand-new *Newsday* in 1940. Hathway later succeeded him there.

Evening Post, some excellent mystery novels—and revving up to run for the state legislature as a first, carefully planned step on the political ladder. Most unpredictable world. On March 11, 1959, Lester Dent died suddenly of a heart attack. I, with many others, will always feel the loss.

In those early days of the *Doc Savage* series, I did one more ghosting. I had this idea of an invisible barrier that could be put down at will by the villains. Nothing could penetrate it. Nothing could go over it or under it, and there was no way you could tell if it was there until you crashed into it.

Les liked the idea, and he told me to work up a chapter outline. This I did, and he OKed it. You can see the story possibilities in that premise. You can go anywhere with it—and we did. I went one way and Les went the other!

Here's what I mean. I rewrote the chapter outline, changing it a bit in the way of improvement, I thought. I even spelled out some of the SCTs by which Doc Savage escapes diabolical traps. Les was away somewhere, and feeling secure about this one, I went ahead and wrote it. I gave it a soft sell at the opening, starting with a housefly buzzing across Doc's desk and dropping—dead—straight down in front of Doc's face. That right-angle drop—Doc wonders idly.

The next sequence involves a seagull observed by Doc from his moving car. The seagull, hitting the invisible and not-yet-explained motion barrier, duplicates the action of the fly, dropping straight down—dead. Next, this happens to an airplane seen by Doc...and in quick succession, Doc's own car runs—smash!—into the invisible barrier...and we're well into the mystery.

Any way you look at it, the free-lance fiction business is a most uncertain life. Dent came back, read my story, and wasn't impressed. To begin with, he was more than a little scornful about starting a *Doc Savage* novel with

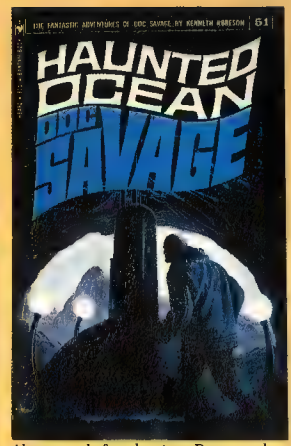
Art: James Bama

Other possible ghosts—including *Captain Future*'s Edmond Hamilton, *Shadow* creator Walter B. Gibson and Travis McGee's John D. MacDonald—never materialized.

one dead fly. He ended up restructuring and rewriting the whole novel. I had the bulk of the action take place in a deep-South swamp—the Okefenokee. Les, in his version, hopped it all over the world and introduced a new set of villains. About all he saved was my idea of the invisible barrier, a few of my SCTs, and the title: *The Motion Menace*. Now that I think of it, I don't believe he even used my SCTs.

After reading my draft of *The Motion Menace*, I remember Les frowning and shaking his head. "Who do you think we're writing for?" he asked. "*Harper's*? You want to know my audience?" He told me about a scroungy-looking, pimple-faced little kid that he had seen on the subway reading *Doc Savage*. "Write for *him*," Les said.

He was overstating the case a bit. Increasingly, he was becoming apologetic about his pulp magazine writing. And yet there was a quality about it that has caused it to live to this day. In his wildest imagination—and we know



Art: James Bama

Always ready for adventure, Donovan also ghosted the exploits of the Phantom Detective, the Black Bat and the Whisperer.

he had imagination!—he couldn't have foreseen that 60 years later, Doc Savage would become a cult in the land, admired in books and fanzines, saluted in movies and TV, re-created in comics and paperbacks. Those fragile, yellowed-page magazines have become prime collectibles.

Most of the old copies have been read to tatters. I was as much surprised as Les would have been when I heard that Bantam was going to reprint the books, back in 1964. I checked to see if I might do some of the updating. They wrote me they weren't going to update—just reprint the stories straight. That frantic, melodramatic old pulp-magazine style—like Dent, I wouldn't have thought it could possibly sell today. But it did—by the millions. Eventually, Bantam reprinted the *Doc Savage* novels and today, they're continuing his adventures in all-new paperbacks written by Will Murray (and based on unpublished Dent outlines, discarded chapters and other material).

My off-track attempt with *The Motion Menace* didn't discourage Dent. He urged me to do another, but I bowed out on that one. Ghosting is a dead alley for a writer—it's hunger writing. I rarely did it unless I needed quick, certain money: a *Phantom Detective* novel; a few *Mike Shayne* titles for Brett Halliday (Dave Dresser); a bunch of short-shorts for Otto Binder's comics-magazine contract with Dell Publishing; a few book chapters for *Superman* editor Mort Weisinger... that's all.

But ghosting *Doc Savage* was fun while it lasted.

IMAGES IN BRONZE

By RICH W. HARVEY

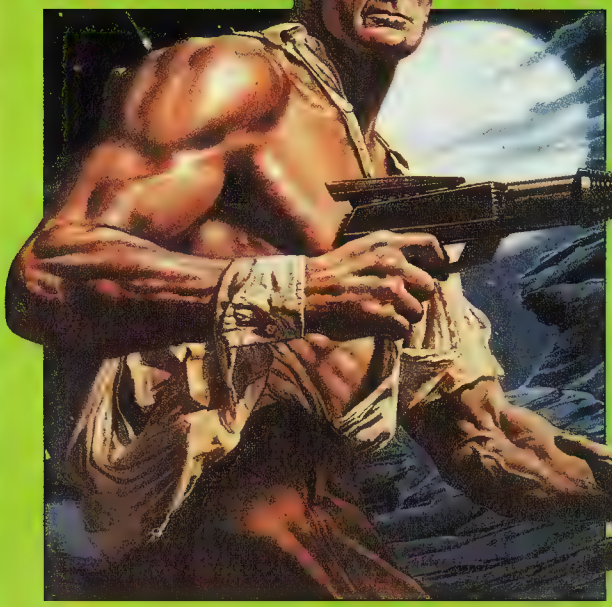


Photo: Courtesy Bob Larkin

For more than a decade, artist Bob Larkin produced Doc Savage's images of bronze.

When Bantam Books awarded artist Bob Larkin the *Doc Savage* series, they gave him some mighty shoes to fill. Cover artists James Bama, Fred Pfeifer and Boris Vallejo had revitalized the Man of Bronze for a new era of paperback readers, leaving a permanent impression on fans everywhere.

"Len Leone was the art director in '76," Larkin recalls, "and he said to basically go with the Jim Bama look that was previously done with the other books. Len was actually the guy who got Jimmy started doing the cover art in '64."

Fans had become spoiled by Bama's superior portraits, and the search was on for an artist who could adapt to the unique style that Bama had created for the series, a trademark look followed by later artists Pfeifer and Vallejo. Larkin's earlier work for Marvel Comics (mostly color covers for the black-and-white magazines) displayed excellent figure drawing and a keen eye for realistic detail, elements that had also made Bama's work so popular.

"In the beginning, I did Jimmy's monochromatic look," Larkin says. "Then, I slowly broke away from that and decided to do my own thing. Basically, I brought the Marvel style of action and color to Doc Savage."

Larkin began producing covers that might have been mistaken for Bama's early work, except that Doc Savage appeared too old and wrinkly, with early attempts such as *Ost* [reprinted as #89 *The Magic Island*] and *The Tunnel Terror*. He soon corrected this problem with the dynamic cover to *The Hate Genius*, which proved he could do justice to the Savage saga.

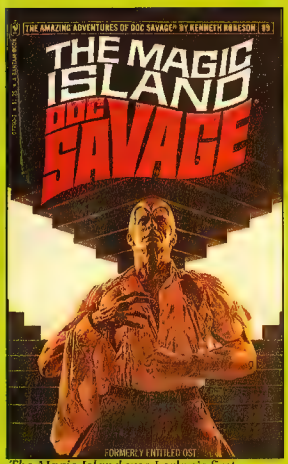
"I wasn't really used to painting Doc, so I just made him older," says Larkin. "But as time went on, I started making him younger. The model I was using at the time, Steve Holland, hasn't changed at all, though *he* is a little wrinklier."

Holland, in fact, has played Doc Savage longer than any Hollywood actor ever will. Known for his TV portrayal of Flash Gordon in the '50s, exactor Holland posed for the very first paperback cover, Bama's classic Doc portrait for *The Man of Bronze*, and still models today for current *Doc* artist Joe DeVito.

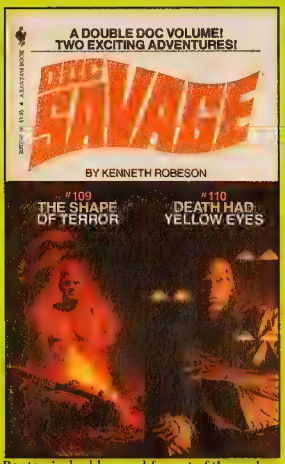
"Jim Avaiti painted a couple of covers, and I think he used himself as a model, but Steve's basically the one who posed for all the Docs. Steve was doing everybody—he was posing for all the Westerns, and he was on every damn book cover for awhile.

"On the cover to *The Three Wild Men* (#121), there are three guys in the foreground, and Doc is in the background with the Manhattan skyline behind him. *All* of those characters are Steve, posing four different ways. Jimmy [Bama] did the same thing when he was painting Doc. It's easier to pay one model instead of getting a few up there, so we just used Steve for all of the poses. Steve is a very thin model, and I would completely redraw him by building up the muscles and the thick neck, and that's pretty close to what Jimmy was doing."

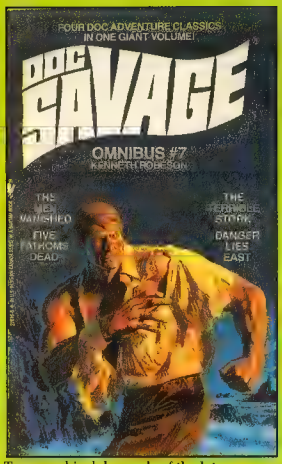
After Larkin had produced a mere 10 covers, Bantam's new *Doc Savage* publishing policy changed. Now two shorter novels, from the pulp magazine's digest-sized period, were reprinted in each paperback. Front covers were split in half, leaving plenty of space up top for the



The Magic Island was Larkin's first attempt at painting Doc. "I just made him older," the artist admits.



Bantam's double-novel format of the early '80s increased the action potential as well as the deadline pressure.



Typographical demands of the later omnibus reprint format limited Larkin's work to classic Doc poses.

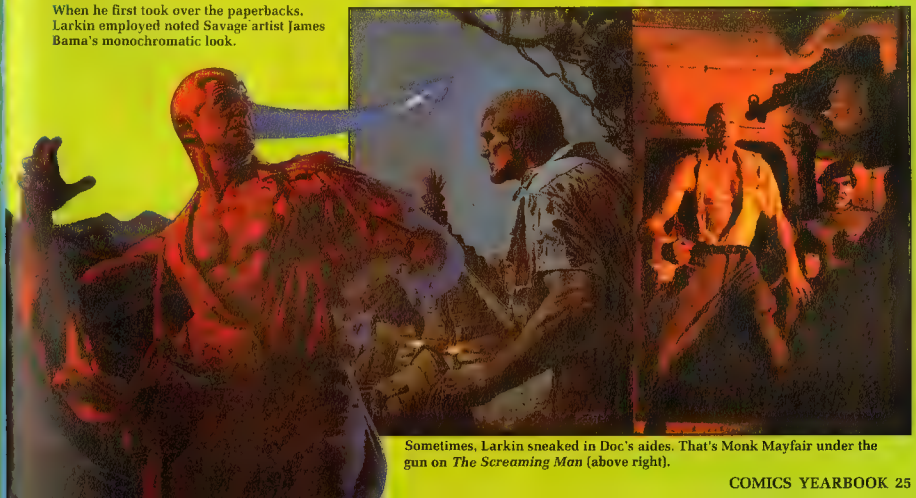
distinctive *Doc Savage* logo; each story would have an individual cover painting. The smaller dimensions proved no problem for Larkin, who could place more action into scenes now free of cluttering type, but other difficulties surfaced.

"I would have one warm-color painting, and the other had to be a cool color," he explains. "There would have to be a green cover and an orange cover, or a blue and a red, just to provide contrast. They were also tough because I had to deliver them both at the same time, so I was under a lot of pressure with the double-Docs. Sometimes they would be late, and there was no time to print them or do corrections, and that was a real problem."

As a result, the double-novel edition of the already reprinted (in 1967) *The Czar of Fear* #21 and *Fortress of Solitude* #22 featured a new Larkin painting for *Fortress* and a reprint of Bama's original *Czar* cover. A similar problem occurred with the reissue as a double-novel of *Secret in the Sky* #19 and *Cold Death* #20, which resulted in the reprinting of vintage Bamas.

"It was weird how the series' cover format changed," says Larkin. "Originally, when I started in 1977, I would just do *one* cover. Then, we went to the double-Docs, where I could actually stretch Doc out and draw the complete figure. Then, with the omnibus series, we went right back to where we started. They wanted Doc up

When he first took over the paperbacks, Larkin employed noted Savage artist James Bama's monochromatic look.



Sometimes, Larkin sneaked in Doc's aides. That's Monk Mayfair under the gun on *The Screaming Man* (above right).

One warm and one cool color painting provided contrast on the double novels.

close for the omnibus books because of the type involved. There were an average of [four to] six titles in each omnibus, with the Doc logo the same."

The mechanics of the paintings proved far easier to overcome than editorial policies. Larkin was allowed to paint covers in his own style, providing that Doc Savage's modern look—the classic torn shirt, jodhpurs and boots initiated by Bama—remained intact.

"They say, 'Don't fix what ain't broke,' and every time I tried to get away from that, the art director said, 'No, I want the ripped shirt.' The full-color stuff is the only thing I managed to get away with. And getting a little bit more action in the figures, instead of the stiff, fine-art look that Jimmy Bama was using."

During the double-novel period, Larkin suggested painting one illustration with the distinctive torn shirt, and allowing another costume on the companion cover. The art director declined, and Doc Savage showed up better dressed only on the covers to *Fortress of Solitude*, *Peril in the North* and *The Lost Giant*, all stories with an Arctic setting.

"There were so many times when I wanted to put Doc in a whole different outfit," Larkin laments, "but they just *never* went for it. I wanted to put him in a tuxedo once, or maybe throw in the Empire State Building, but they said, 'No way.' I was going to try it with *no* shirt one time—maybe Doc could have torn it off, and had it in his hand—but they said no, the shirt has to be on him.

"I tried to get a few more of his men on there, like Ham or Renny. I got away with it a few times—Monk showed up because he looked like a gorilla, so he was perfect. I had always wanted to put Doc's cousin Pat Savage on a cover. I had come up with a couple of sketches where Pat was involved, and they said, '*No* women on the covers.' "

When the series went to its omnibus format, the cover typography so restricted the artwork that a return to the iconographic Doc Savage pose—waist up, elbows bent for the fists—was necessary. Action poses were no longer possible, and Larkin's attempts to bring new elements to the Savage art would have been wasted.

"After awhile, I gave up on it. The art director would tell me to just play it safe, and not change it at all, so I was stuck."

Larkin's biggest problem was the torn shirt itself. For such an unassuming little rag—which even prompted Bantam's advertising department to proclaim, "Doc needs a new shirt!" in their old poster promotion—Larkin laughingly recalls this as his toughest challenge.

"The original ripped shirt that Jimmy Bama used disappeared," he explains. "Steve Holland still has the jodhpurs and the boots, but not the original shirt. I had to find a new ripped shirt for Doc and make it look *exactly* like the old one, but it was quite impossible. I tried to tear it up the way Jimmy did, but he always had that one thread holding the left side of the shirt together—I always wondered how he did that.

"I was always a fan of Doc," Larkin notes.

All Doc Savage Art: Bob Larkin

Says Larkin, "I brought the Marvel style of action and color to Doc Savage."

Selected Savage Art: Copyright 1984, 1985 1988 1989,1990 Bob Larkin

Doc Savage Character: Copyright 1990 Conde Nast Publications, Inc.

Doc always had to wear a trademark torn shirt, but Larkin was allowed to clothe him for *The Lost Giant.*

Longtime Savage model Steve Holland also worked for Larkin, but they had to get a new torn shirt.

"Boris was involved with painting the Docs, and I think he was modeling himself and did his own ripped-shirt bit," Larkin recalls. "When Fred Pfeifer was doing Doc, he was using one of those no-press shirts. You couldn't wrinkle it up no matter how much you tried, because it was made of polyester.

"Finally, I got one of my father's shirts from World War II and tore it to pieces, and that was the one I used. Joe DeVito now has my ripped shirt, which he's using for the new Doc Savage illustrations."

Today, the 43-year-old artist resides in New York State, surrounded by his numerous paintings, classic and in progress. The basement holds a few of his Doc Savage originals, including some covers by the other artists.

"I was always a fan of Doc," says Larkin. "In fact, I have *all* of the original novels. I remember my father telling me about it, and he had a few of the originals—but when he passed away, my mother just couldn't remember where he hid 'em! So, *somewhere*

(continued on page 74)

THE MAN BEHIND DOC SAVAGE

Lester Dent, the cowboy with five typewriters, had the adventures of a lifetime, in fiction & fact.

By CAL TINNEY

In June 1945, newspaperman Cal Tinney interviewed his friend Lester Dent, the writer behind Street & Smith's Doc Savage Magazine *(and author of most of the 181 novels published therein). Tinney produced this lengthy profile of Dent, which was intended for magazine publication. Ultimately, it was* never *published anywhere.*

All Pulp Covers & Dent Photos: Courtesy Will Murray/Norma Dent

Meet the man behind Doc Savage, heroic Lester Dent.

Today, in preparing this manuscript for its publication debut in COMICS SCENE, the editors decided to preserve its brash excitement and stylistic eccentricities, presenting the article in much the same way readers would have seen it had it actually appeared 47 years ago.

Thus, it's still in present tense—with Dent and his father, both now long dead, noted here as living...with off-hand, then-contemporary references to individuals (Pat Hurley, Death Valley Scotty), events (Bank Holiday 1933) and products (a Packard automobile) now long-forgotten...and with most of Dent's apparent "tall tale" exaggeration about his life still intact.

Art: Walter M. Baumhofer

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According to Dent, Doc is a combination of Sherlock Holmes, detective Craig Kennedy, Tarzan and Abraham Lincoln.

At the time of its writing, Tinney was a newspaper columnist, radio commentator and writer of NBC's Pistol Pete Rice, *a radio show based on Street & Smith's Western pulp character.*

COMICS SCENE is indebted to pulp historian Will Murray and Cal Tinney's attorney for their assistance in publishing this rare interview.

You can never tell how a cowboy will wind up. He may wind up on the screen the way Tom Mix did, or as Ambassador to China the way Pat Hurley did, or as a champion word-wrangler the way Wyoming-raised Lester Dent did.

Meet Les. All six-foot-two of him.

And don't expect him to rope a calf on the White House lawn. He hasn't roped any cattle in years now, though he still raises a few, and his 72-year-old dad still hopes to get stocky Les away from the typewriters and the production of blood-and-thunder literature long enough someday to help brand the steers. Yes, typewriters (plural)—for Les, like any good Wyoming cowboy, has a string of mounts to choose from when he goes to saddle up. Instead of one typewriter, he has a whole Remuda of them. He has *five* typewriters. And while one is working, four are always resting.

Resting? Well, resting—with their saddles on. You can't turn to a one of 'em but what it has a sheet of paper in it, with writing on it—writing that's part of another adventure story.

Maybe they'll never say, "When better stories are written, Dent will write them," but they do say, "When *more* stories are written, Dent will write them." But Lester, at 40, doesn't write as much as he used to write. Now that his once-black hair is turning grey behind his high hairline, he has settled down to writing only 100,000 words a month. He has almost retired now. He isn't pulling out all the stops and spewing forth 100,000 words *a week* the way he did in the old days. Otherwise, he might not have time for wild game hunting.

Tanned, fidgety, 222-pound Dent is the only man in the world who has written nine 60,000-word novels in six weeks, and then had the heroine walk up and start talking to him.

"I remember it just as if it were yesterday," Dent declares, scratching the small, reddish mustache on his upper lip. "I was sitting alone, at my typewriter, writing a boy and girl sequence. Boy and girl meet, and they spat, and they reunite, stuff. I always visualize my characters somewhat, and suddenly I noticed dark hair on the girl's leg; it showed through her sheer hose. I made a mental note that I had better have her shave her leg.

Art: Robert G. Harris

Dent's Savage gadgets predate many actual inventions. "We just anticipated the scientists; that's all," he says.

Then, I noticed that the hero's shoelaces were tied in a kind of knot that I didn't know how to tie. I had just decided that was curious when the girl and boy turned and started talking to me. The hero asked me if I had noticed where he had put his hat down, and the girl told me no, she could stand up, when I offered her a chair. They were there; they were *real*. They were flesh and blood. It took just a moment to realize what had happened, shut that typewriter and get the hell out of there.

"Six weeks in Florida and I was all right again."

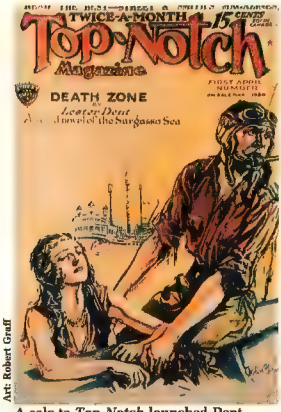
Art: Robert G. Harris

"I've never said Doc could jump over the Empire State Building the way Superman can," Dent protests.

Dent's most famous brainchild is *Doc Savage*, the monthly pulp magazine which he writes under the pseudonym of Kenneth Robeson. Dent gets madder than a Wyoming bobcat every time he sees a copy of the magazine on the newsstands. Sure, *Doc Savage* is bringing him in more money than the income-tax collector can shake another form at. And it's the bestselling magazine in the detective-adventure field. Overseas, soldiers bored with killing the enemy read *Doc Savage* for excitement. Even so, the sight of an issue makes Dent's blue eyes glow in anger. Why? Because when you turn to the table of

Art: Walter M. Baumhofer

"Never have your hero do anything that you wouldn't like to do yourself."



Art: Robert Graff

A sale to *Top-Notch* launched Dent. "Almost immediately, I began to sell practically everything I wrote."

contents, the name "Kenneth Robeson" is there instead of "Lester Dent."

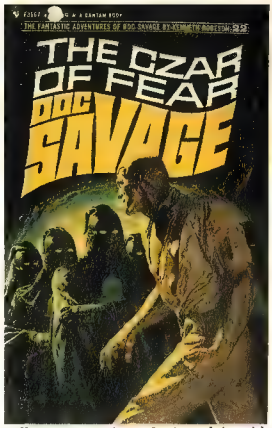
It's the publisher's idea to bring the book out under a house name like that," Dent raves. "I'm *against* it. I believe a writer does much better work under his own name."

Doc Savage, in case you don't know it, was the forerunner of all this deluge of supermen in the comic pages and elsewhere. Doc, as originally conceived and launched by Dent a dozen years ago, was a brilliant, strapping, six-foot-four-inch-tall super-American who could do anything. Born on Bank Holiday, 1933, in *The Man of Bronze*, he walked on air, stopped trains with will power and personally chastised a whole army that was misbehaving. As he was born on Bank Holiday, you might ask, "Why didn't Doc stop the Depression?" Well, he did—for Dent.

The magazine clicked so much that within six months, it had 27 imitators. Circulation climbed to a phenomenal figure for a pulp magazine. Doc went on the radio, out came a comic that sold more, even, than the magazine, and *Doc Savage* began being published in nine foreign languages.

Street and Smith, the publishers, were surprised. So was the Wyoming-raised creator himself. "I didn't realize how many people wanted to be supermen," he says. "It's more clear to me now. A man comes in from driving a taxi all day to find his wife threatening to throw him out on his ear for not bringing home more tips to turn over to her. Naturally, he wants to be a Superman. Or a barber who had to vegetate in his shop all day, don't you reckon he yearns for a chance to get out and re-order the life of whole continents? Doc is the what-I-would-like-to-be dream of everybody, including me."

Doc Savage first entered the comics scene with Street & Smith's own line in 1940, seeing action decades later at Gold Key, Marvel, DC and Millennium.



Czar Art: James Bama

Will Murray continues Doc's exploits with new Bantam paperback yarns based on unused Dent material: *Flight into Fear*, *The Whistling Wraith* and *The Forgotten Realm* (out in November).

And how did Dent dream Doc up?

"In looking about for a character for all these stories I was going to write, I looked at what people had gone for already. So, I took Sherlock Holmes, with his deductive ability. Tarzan of the Apes, with his towering physique and muscular ability; Craig Kennedy [a "science detective" from early pulps] with his scientific knowledge; and Abraham Lincoln with his Christliness. Then, I rolled 'em all into one to get—Doc Savage."

Doesn't Doc have any vices at all? Doesn't he even kiss the heroine?

"Lord, no!" Dent exclaims. "For eight volumes—that goes back eight years—he hasn't kissed anything but the blueprints of a jet-propelled fire extinguisher that saved his life."

Spider, Satan, Cargo Art: Bob Larkin/Bronze Art: James Bama

Don't get the idea that the inventions in *Doc Savage* are goofy. "We—that's Doc and I," industrious Dent says, "just anticipate the scientists; that's all."

Here are the firsts which this inventive team has scored:

—Dreamed up Sea-trace, that stuff that's dropped out of planes to color the water for downed fliers, 10 years or more before it came into actual use for our armed forces.

—Used radar as far back as 1934, although it had been in a laboratory state of development before then.

From 1964-1990, Bantam Books reprinted all of Doc's adventures in paperbacks—including Dent's previously unpublished *Red Spider* and the very first saga, *The Man of Bronze*.

—Employed a chemical to frighten sharks away from swimmers at least 10 years before the U.S. Navy used it in World War II.

—Utilized a nerve gas, and such a gas is reputed to have been used later by the Germans.

—Used the super-sonic dog-whistle long before it was developed and marketed.

—Employed a small anesthetic gas grenade. Dent doesn't know how much use was made of this item in WWII, but the U.S. military *has* experimented with it.

Many, many years ago, Doc used a breathing device for submarines. Such a gadget was suddenly sprung on the Allies by the Germans near WWII's end, and it almost turned submarine warfare in their favor.

Machine-pistols? Doc was firing those a long time ago. Also, Doc had infrared black-light-photography flash bulbs before they were perfected and marketed. And he used wire recording 12 years before it was offered to the public.

In 1935, a fellow in Miami, Florida constructed a treasure-finding gadget on Dent's specifications. From this, years later was developed the U.S. Army's device for locating land mines. The same fellow turned them out.

Dent's grammar is not the best. On three different occasions, he has had editors call him into their New York offices and say, "Here, Wyoming, we've got a little present for you." They have then given him an elementary grammar book. (Alas for the editors, he never read a single one of them!)

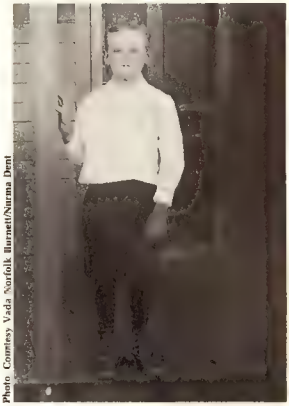


Photo: Courtesy Vada Norfolk Barnett/Norma Dent

As a youngster in Wyoming, Dent first encountered pulp magazines. It changed his whole life.

Growing up on a ranch, Dent punched cows. "Every time they punched me," he says, "I punched them back."

Writing *Doc Savage* has provided Dent with unusual experiences.

"Next to the time I took my wife to a Ponca City, Oklahoma movie on the day we married and I tried to give the tickets to a wooden Indian, I haven't been so embarrassed by anything as I was by news that came to me through the FBI one day. They asked me please not to make the ransom notes in my stories so realistic. Seems a kidnapper had just clipped one out bodily and used it in Detroit to collect a ransom."

A truly tragic note was struck when it came out that a small boy had been so fascinated by a Doc Savage prisoner's knot that he tried it on himself, in his father's basement. It worked too well, strangling him.

"Thereafter, I didn't get too specific about knots, or the ingredients of poisonous drugs or gases," Dent explains. He didn't even get specific about jiu-jitsu holds after it was revealed that the lifeguards at an Atlantic Coast beach had been demonstrating Doc Savage's method of producing unconsciousness to nerve pressure in the spinal area and had killed two people.

Dent, horseman and expert shot that he is, has a quick explanation for why he doesn't write Westerns. "Shucks," he says, "I was raised on a ranch! Now wouldn't I be crazy to go writing about something I knew all about? I've never been north of southern Alaska, but I write wonderful stories about the North Pole. You're crazy if you think you're going to get me to write about Pumpkin Buttes, Wyoming. I've *already* seen Pumpkin Buttes."

He has, too. Pumpkin Buttes is near the Greasewood Ranch where he grew up, the only child of two ranch people who lived so far from neighbors that when Allie Dent, his mother, went next door to borrow a cup of sugar, she carried enough oats in the buggy to feed the horse for a week.

"When that particular part of Wyoming began to get settled, the folks took me in a covered wagon, the real old-fashioned way, and we broke a trail over the Big Horn Mountains.

"Punch cows? Of course, I punched cows. All up and down the Wyoming slopes I punched cows. Every time they punched me, I punched them back."

His dad gave Lester his first rifle when he was seven years old. "I shot my first antelope when I was eight. The antelopes were thicker than rabbits out there where we lived."

Young Dent got into a great deal of reading in those days: Sheep-dip catalogs, almanacs and Lydia Pinkham pamphlets. Then, a blood-and-thunder pulp magazine fell into his hands. It changed his whole life. "I never read such wonderful literature before. The minute I got through helping Dad to put out a prairie fire, skin a bear or whatever other boring, everyday humdrum duty I had to go through, I would rush to the bunkhouse and read pulp magazines in which people really got active.

"I had no playmates; I lived a completely distorted youth. My only playmate was my imagination, and that period of intense imaginative creation which kids generally get over at age five or six, I carried till I was 12 or 13. My imaginary voyages and accomplishments were extremely real. I almost think I learned at the time a form of self-hypnosis."

Dent himself seriously wonders sometimes why he can't write short stories and novels that make greater use of his Western background. "There are Wall Street secretaries writing stories about cattle rustlers that haven't seen a pickpocket," Dent notes, "whereas we really had cattle rustlers in Wyoming. And I can tell you about the time the range men and settlers of that whole section of Wyoming formed a posse and took out after a bunch of horse thieves. The horse thieves retreated to a place called Hole in the Wall—famous outlaw hideout—and fought off the posse for three days. When they got bored, the horse thieves chased the posse off. It really happened that way. Maybe that's why I can't write Western stories. I might tell the truth."

Tiring of cow-punching and farming, Dent decided to be a banker. So, he went to Chillicothe Business College at Chillicothe, Missouri, to enroll. While he was waiting to fill out the blanks, the boy next in line told him that a business college graduate who entered a bank only made $15 a week to start, whereas a graduate of the telegraphy course could make more than $35 a week the minute he got out. Dent decided then and there to take the telegraphy course.

He was married, and working as a telegraph operator in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when he came to work one day and found a fellow operator, not due to go to work until two hours later, pecking away on a typewriter. "I asked him, 'Whatever in the world makes you so crazy as to come up here two hours ahead of time?' The fellow replied, 'I'm writing a story.' 'Writing a story?' I said, and I started laughing. I laughed uncontrollably. I was still laughing when this fellow turned over a piece of paper on his desk, and it was a $450 check for his last story. I quit laughing."

Dent decided then and there that if one telegraph operator could write $450 short stories on the side, so could another. To Dent, it didn't matter that he had flunked English grammar in high school three times successively and might not be cut out to be a writer. "I was out to spend any and all $450 checks I could get my hands on; that's all I thought about," Dent says. He wrote 12 stories—four of them were books—and didn't sell a word!

"I was beginning to hate that other telegraph operator when I saw him. And my wife was beginning to hate me, because I wrote all the time. Even Christmas Day, my wife had to see both the turkey and my typewriter on the table. But finally, I sold a story to the now-defunct *Top Notch* magazine for $250. That launched me. Almost immediately, I began to sell practically everything I wrote—several hundred dollars' worth a month.

"Then, I knocked out a 9,000-word adventure story on flying—why shouldn't I? I had met a guy named Orville Wright once—and submitted it to another pulp writer, a night editor on a Tulsa newspaper, for his opinion. 'It's terrible,' he told me. 'Burn it! You've managed, even though you're new in the field, to make a little name for yourself now, and this will sure spoil your reputation.' He not only said, 'Burn it!' but he gave me some matches. I was foolhardy: I mailed the story to Dell Publishing and in about three days, I got a telegram.

"The wire said, 'Can you come to New York at once to write exclusively for us with a $500 a month drawing account to start?' I telegraphed a friend of mine in New York City asking him to find out if there was a reputation for insanity attached to the Dell people. He wired back that he had been unable to find out about their sanity, but that they were a big outfit.

"Finally, I got a leave of absence from my employers, the Associated Press. I told what I thought were some wonderful lies about wanting to go to New York so my wife could be operated on or something. The first thing I found out when I got to New York was that I hadn't fooled the AP at all, but they were willing to give me my old job back if I failed.

"When I entered the office of Richard E. Martinsen, the Dell official who had sent me the telegram, he tossed a copy of Dashiell Hammett's latest book at me and said, 'This is the sort of thing we want you to do. What impresses us about your writing is the fast movement, the brittle violence of emotion and action.'

"Well, I tried. They gave me three whole magazines to fill every month, and I immediately began to get fabulously rich and go Greenwich Village. I was an *author*. I rolled in dough for four months, and then all three magazines resoundingly went broke. I don't think it was all my fault. This was 1932, and I'm sure the Depression can assume some of the responsibility. I kept writing, but nobody would buy the stuff. This went on month after

While working as a telegrapher, Dent first decided to try his hand at writing.

month, till half-a-year had gone by. Seeing the jig was up, I packed, and the wife and I left New York so poor I didn't even let the porters carry our bags, as I didn't have money to tip them."

If you can't get rich one way, you can get rich another, Dent decided, and the next means he tried was panning for gold in the Southwest. It was something he had always wanted to do, anyway.

Les and his wife, Norma, carried a pan into Death Valley—"I had heard about Death Valley Scotty finding gold, so I figured that was a good place to start"—and lived with the famed Death Valley Scotty. It seemed to Dent that anybody with as much gold as Scotty was reputed to have wouldn't want to keep all of it. He remembers that he was "there some time prospecting with Scotty, but I never did hit pay dirt."

The Dents didn't starve, however. On Scotty's place were date trees transplanted from Egypt, and Scotty, using a tommy-gun, shot down all the dates the Dents could eat. "It buggered the dates up a bit," Dent recalls, "but we appreciated the gesture."

Ambitious Dent and his wife then panned for gold elsewhere in Arizona, and in Chihuahua in Old Mexico and along the Dolores River in southwestern Colorado. "We didn't do so bad," he recalls. "Sometimes we found edible roots in the pan."

They did pan enough gold to pay for their trip, and then returned to New York. "I had dreamed up this idea for *Doc Savage*. While I wrote and sold other stories—the publishing depression was over enough for me to make a little money—I hounded the Street and Smith people to bring out Doc. They did. The first number appeared with the publisher listing 'Kenneth Roberts' as the author. I don't know who was madder, me or the real Roberts. Whoever in the office had chosen the name didn't know there *was* a Kenneth Roberts already established as a *Saturday Evening Post* writer. They changed the name to Kenneth Robeson and apologized to Roberts. They never have apologized to me."

Dent's first gesture, after the new magazine's prosperity, was to buy a yacht. "Having been raised in Wyoming, where we had to haul our drinking water 20 miles in a barrel and then strain the wiggle-worms out with a flour-sack, it was inevitable that I should want to see the sea. Also, I had been writing and selling a lot of sea stories. After my 50th story about the ocean, I thought I should go look at it." He went, and has never been able to write a sea story since. He doesn't know why, unless it's the old trouble that he must write about something he has never seen.

Wherever business demands, Dent flies—in his own plane.

The yacht figured in his life for the next five years. Once it was stolen. The one-time cowboy followed its trail all up and down the Atlantic coast till finally, at Norfolk, Virginia, the Coast Guard found it, still manned by the man who had taken it. Outraged, Dent strapped on a six-shooter and roared down to deal with the thief, an ex-rum-runner. "The no-good son of a sea-cook wouldn't fight! I told him he was better set for a battle than I was, not being handicapped by the dead weight of a six-shooter on his person the way I was, but he wouldn't scrap. Instead, he got down on his knees and told me that if he had known how much it cost to operate a yacht, he wouldn't have stolen it. He begged me to take it back."

Art: Robert G. Harris

Doc "still discovers strange tribes of people," notes Dent, but the hero "has *never* left this planet."

Using diving equipment, Dent took numerous undersea movies from his yacht and then raised relief money touring northern Missouri, where he showed his films in schoolhouses 75 times. His diving equipment and treasure-locating device were exhibits at each performance. He collected money to buy school-lunches and glasses for needy children. That wasn't the last time that towering Dent played the good Samaritan role, though he doesn't like to talk about it. In recent years, he has assumed responsibility for several young men who were in trouble with the law. In at least three cases, they were already virtually on their way to the state prison farm when he intervened. Out of the three, two have continued to go straight.

The yacht was fun. That is, until Dent, his wife, and two employees were caught out in mid-ocean during a hurricane. "The wind came straight off Florida," he says. "It had palm trees, bungalows, divorcees, everything in it! For two days, it blew about 250 [miles] an hour. Then, it settled back to a mere 125. Duck? Of course I wanted to duck. I was never so ready to swap a yacht for a submarine in my life."

Once he made shore, Wyoming's gift to dime-literature sold the yacht, hired a secretary to whom he could dictate his Doc Savage stories while he was on sight-seeing buses, and went to Europe with his wife and the secretary. He was arrested in Czechoslovakia for taking pictures, and put in jail. "I remembered all the times that Doc had been imprisoned, and what means he had used to escape, but I found calling up the local Associated Press was the most practical course to follow. This particular AP man had written the constitution of Czechoslovakia, so the president

came to the jail, got me and the wife out, and entertained us at the presidential shack all afternoon. Even Doc Savage couldn't do better than that."

By 1940, the Dents had accumulated so many souvenirs, what-nots and truck in general that they had to build some place to keep it. Furthermore, the cowboy author of *Doc Savage* was a little tired, temporarily, of traveling around all over the world with five typewriters. So, he moved to La Plata, Missouri, a village of 1,500 people, and built the House of Gadgets as his home is called. It is the kind of place that good *Doc Savage* readers go to when they die.

The garage door opens automatically when the Dents' Packard comes up the driveway. A communication system enables Mrs. Dent—should she be in the attic—to talk to Les in the basement, or vice versa, or wherever they happen to be. There is a darkroom for developing film and a burglar alarm system that challenges anything bigger than a fly. There are concealed doors, fluorescent lighting, delayed-action switches, closets that

Art: Walter M. Baumhofer

"I believe a writer does much better work under his own name," Dent opines.

light up when you open the door, and, it is rumored, an electric eye that starts a fire under the coffee-pot if you just wave good-morning at it.

A whole wing of the house is devoted to Dent's five typewriters.

There, in the House of Gadgets, he throws his parachute after a plane trip, and there, quite over a thousand miles from New York City and the editors, he observes his eccentricities. He works from 9 p.m. till 3 a.m., because as he puts it, "There's nothing else to do then." He sleeps till 10:30 a.m. and eats only two meals a day. Boy Scouts come to him to learn telegraphy, camping, knot-tying and woodcraft. For adults, he has a bar. When the bar is open, he has been known to talk of running for Congress, and to declare, "I wouldn't mind if *today* there was as much emphasis on independence and self-reliance as there was when *I* was a boy!"

Restless Dent owns and flies a plane now. "I thought I had gotten away from the yacht," he says, "but I find I didn't. A plane is just a land-going yacht, in expense, and don't let anybody tell you differently."

His 72-year-old father, the one-time Wyoming cattleman, now farms just outside of La Plata, and makes a good living off his land. Les has just as much acreage next to it, as well-stocked as his father's, and can't make a dime on it. Bern Dent bought a copy of his son's *Doc Savage* once. The old man's only comment after reading it, was, "Well, Les, you always could lie."

Flying his own plane, versatile Dent skedaddles to Kansas City, to St. Louis, to Chicago, and even to New York, whenever business demands. Needless to say, he doesn't write flying stories any more—since he learned to fly.

Not counting his flying, game-hunting, fishing, skiing, archery or magic (at which he's no slouch), Dent now has two hobbies. One is hypnotism. He isn't expert at it yet; so far, the only person he has put to sleep was a girl who runs a telephone switchboard, and she probably was half-asleep to start with. His other hobby is teaching a secretary, a house-maid or another telegraph operator to write detective-adventure fiction.

"Don't worry about titles," he tells them. "You can get titles out of Shakespeare. Any page of Shakespeare will give you a dozen titles. But concentrate on *plot*; never have your hero do anything that you wouldn't like to do yourself."

That, if anything, is the secret of the Dent success. He isn't interested in showing a sensitive young female neurotic in a boarding house going to pieces because she always gets the cracked teacup. Instead, he writes about tall, strong, glowing, super-brilliant people we would all like to be, adventurers like Doc Savage.

He shies a little at first from admitting responsibility for all the flood of supermen in blood-and-thunder stories since *Doc Savage* began.

"Are you really glad you started this wave of super people in the pulp magazines and comic strips?" Dent has been asked.

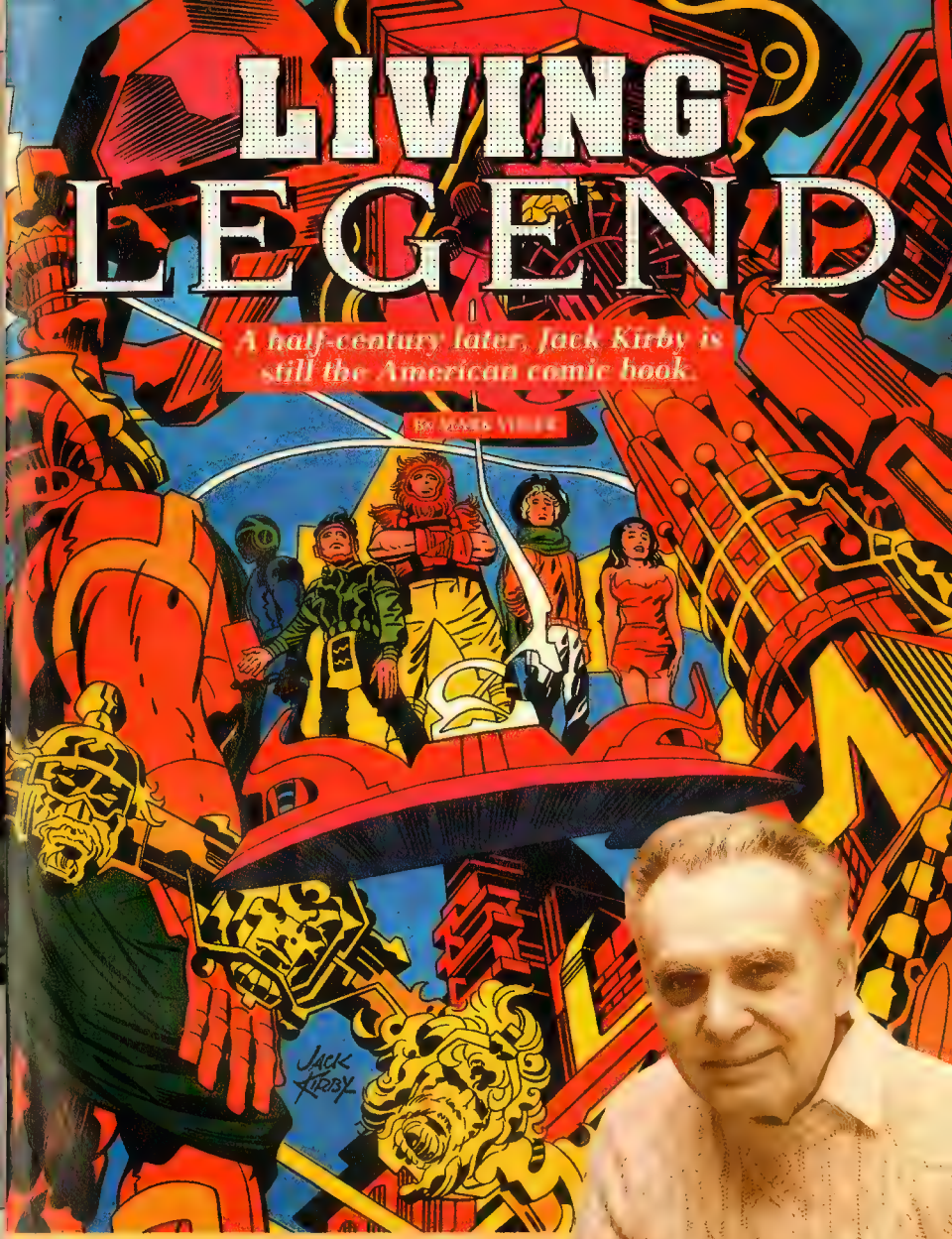
(continued on page 74)

The prolific author's hobbies include sailing, flying, game-hunting, fishing, skiing, archery and magic.

LIVING LEGEND

A half-century later, Jack Kirby is still the American comic book.

By [illegible]



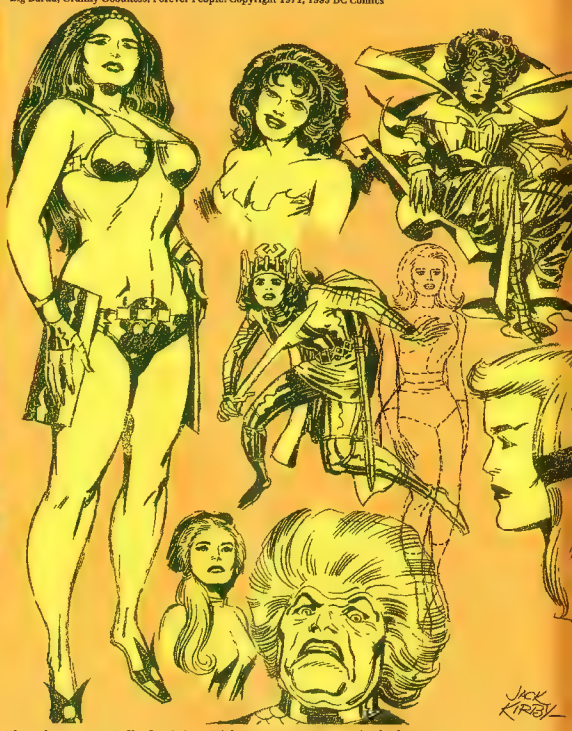
After 50 years in comics, Kirby is still a major influence on many of today's artists.

Photo: Albert De Guzman

Art: Jack Kirby/Sol Brodsky

Not only did Kirby work on *FF* #1, but he went on to do the next 100 issues.

Big Barda, Granny Goodness, Forever People: Copyright 1971, 1993 DC Comics



Though not especially feminine, Kirby's women are particularly strong.

Jack "King" Kirby, the maverick artist/writer/editor—who created or co-created Captain America, the Boy Commandos, the Newsboy Legion, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Thor, the New Gods, the Demon, Mr. Miracle, etc. etc. etc.—has carved out an irreproachable career. The 76-year-old New York City native is one of comics' most important figures. Quite simply, he is American comics.

As the artist of Fantastic Four *#1—the book that ignited the Marvel Age—Kirby charted the company's course, drawing not only the* FF, *but* The Mighty Thor *and the Captain America half of* Tales of Suspense *throughout the '60s. He was the first artist on* The Avengers, The Uncanny X-Men, The Incredible Hulk *and* Sergeant Fury and the Howling Commandos.

It has been almost a decade since new Kirby comics hit the newsstands, but recently Topps Comics initiated a line of Kirby-created books (which he discussed in CS #34).

Although the artist prefers not to discuss the specifics of Marvel's early days ("That can be rehashed and rehashed"), he here addresses how his life experiences affect his art, his "living legend" status, the way he draws women and the state of comic books today.

COMICS SCENE: Are you comfortable with—or do you think at all about—the term "living legend?"

Jack Kirby brings his special brand of superheroes back to comics in a new Topps Comics line designed by the artist.

Photo: Mark Voger

JACK KIRBY: That's a term used by outsiders. Of course, it's very flattering. I suppose I've been in the field long enough to have that kind of thing applied to me. Eventually, if you stay long enough in your field, you'll become a living legend, too.

CS: The quintessential Kirby-drawn hero resembles you facially. Do artists always—subconsciously, anyway—draw themselves? Or ideals of themselves?

KIRBY: That's true of every artist. Somehow, his stories reflect his own feelings, his own experiences. I was brought up on the Lower East Side [of New York City]. In that kind of an environment, you find a lot of action. Of course, later on that becomes a part of you. It goes into whatever you're doing. You'll find that the early *Captain Americas* were full of action, and they sold very well because of it.

CS: In your action scenes, one can almost see movement and feel force. What has enabled you to imagine this action?

SUPERMAN'S PAL
JIMMY OLSEN
SEE THE WHIZ WAGON! THE GIANT "ANYTHING CAR!"
JIMMY OLSEN IS OUR LEADER! WE'LL GIVE THE ORDERS!
GUN 'EM DOWN!
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: THE RETURN OF
THE NEWSBOY LEGION!

Superman & Jimmy Olsen Characters: Copyright 1970, 1993 DC Comics

A rejected cover sketch from 1970 shows Jimmy Olsen in an odd place, as well as an appearance by the Joe Simon & Kirby-created Newsboy Legion.

Art: Jack Kirby/Dick Ayers

Creator or co-creator of many comic favorites, Kirby says, "I've always known the value of keeping the viewer interested."

With Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and others, Kirby is responsible for the start of the Marvel Age of comics.

KIRBY: I'm not a great athlete, but I've been involved in many fights. When I was brought up, fighting went on all the time between young people. I've gone through World War II as a rifleman and a scout. I've been through many instances of that kind.

CS: In certain books you did in the '70s—*New Gods, 2001* and *The Eternals*—you seem philosophical, sometimes downright religious. Are you religious? Were you trying to say something with these books?

KIRBY: I like reading all the legends. Yes, there's a religious part of me. That kind of thing is always based on truth. Whatever you read in my stories is a *true* reflection of what I really think about things. I've never told fairy tales to the readers.

CS: Do you have any thoughts on the hereafter?

KIRBY: Somehow, I tend to believe in it. I believe the Bible. I guess I come from that kind of a background, where people like to believe the best of things. The Bible can keep us on an even keel. I think there's a lot of truth in the Bible, practical truth. It keeps man from descending into utter chaos.

CS: You've been so prolific. Have you ever gotten writer's block or artist's block?

KIRBY: No. I knew exactly what I was doing. I liked what I was doing. Whatever came out of my work was usually very, very salable.

CS: Over the years, you always seemed to strive for different ways to lay out a page. The one-panel page, the one-panel spread, photo collages...

KIRBY: Yes, that was a way of making the general format changeable. Just like film, I found different ways of telling the story. A motion picture will give you wide shots, it'll give you close-ups, it'll find different ways to make the picture entertaining. And I did the same thing with comics, because essentially, I'm a filmgoer. I've always known the value of keeping the viewer interested. Collages were another way of finding new avenues of entertainment. I enjoyed doing that thoroughly.

CS: You've drawn countless women—Sue Storm of the *Fantastic Four*, Jane

The Incredible Hulk

All Art: Jack Kirby

Captain Victory Characters & Art: Copyright 1981 Jack Kirby, Inc. & Jack Kirby

The "concept man" for the new line, Kirby's ideas have played well over the years.

FIN FANG FOOM
PART 2
LIFTING A SECTION OF THE ANCIENT GREAT WALL OF CHINA, THE INCREDIBLE FIN FANG FOOM SNAPPED IT THROUGH THE AIR--LIKE A GIGANTIC BULL-WHIP!!
HE SHATTERS THE WALL TO BITS!
BEHOLD MY POWER, MORTALS! THINK YOU TO DEFY ME NOW?!! HA! HA! HA!

Marvel's pre-*FF* stories focused on monsters like Kirby's immortal Fin Fang Foom.

Foster in *Thor,* Beautiful Dreamer from *Forever People,* Vera Gentry in *2001.* Your women are beautiful in their own way, but they're powerful and not altogether sexual. They appear to be physically strong women. Do you agree?

KIRBY: Yes. I like strong women. I respect women in general. Women have always had great potential. They're continuing to become prominent in their own way. If you look at Hillary Clinton, you'll know what I mean.

CS: Viewing your 100-plus-issue run of *Fantastic Four,* tremendous artist growth is evident. Did you feel yourself growing more powerful as an artist?

KIRBY: Yes, I did. Actually, I've always felt that way. I've *always* tried to improve my style, and I believe I have. I'm still working at it.

CS: Did you always know which inker was going to be finishing your work? If so, did you play to that inker?

KIRBY: No. I've always done my pencils my way. The inkers were chosen for me. They all did a fine job. They had their own styles, but they never changed the shape of my pencils.

CS: Do you have a particular favorite inker?

The Silver Surfer was added by Kirby, who thought Galactus needed a herald.

KIRBY: Well, Mike Royer did most of the inking on the later stuff, and he's excellent. And I liked Joe Sinnott. Actually, I liked them all. They all enhanced my drawing style in some manner.

CS: You've talked about this before, but briefly outline your Topps work.

KIRBY: Well, I'm the concept man. I create ideas that can be expanded into bestselling books. I created the initial characters—they may go on from there. Bombast, Captain Glory and Night-Glider are genuine action characters. *Satan's Six* are a little more subtle.

CS: That's the one where you pencilled eight pages and the cover. Had you kept in practice? Was it easy to get it back?

KIRBY: Oh, sure. I did them quite a while ago anyway. I haven't done much since those days—I more or less concentrate on creating things. But I've got many things around the house which I've drawn and created through the years. Topps will be doing a lot of that stuff.

CS: Several of the artists involved are younger talents like Frank Miller and

Fantastic Four, Thor, Silver Surfer, Hulk, Black Panther, Spider-Man, Giant-Man, Sub-Mariner, Sgt. Fury, Fin Fang Foom & All Related Characters. Trademark & Copyright 1962, 1964, 1966, 1977, 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group

TALES TO ASTONISH
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IND.
57
JULY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢
GIANT-MAN and the WONDERFUL WASP...
in "ON THE TRAIL OF SPIDER-MAN!"
FEATURING THE MARVELOUS MARVEL BRAND OF ACTION!
THERE IS A RATHER GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ISSUE! (NOW'S THAT FOR USING THE SOFT-SELL!!)
Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

Brought up where "you find a lot of action," Kirby's work reflects that.

Kirby praises his inkers, "They all enhance my drawing style in some manner."

Todd McFarlane. These are people who have always expressed a love for your work.

KIRBY: I know that. They're wonderful young people, but they're also very professional. They do a great job in their own right. Frank Miller's a good friend.

CS: Was it fun playing yourself in an episode of Bob Newhart's TV show?

KIRBY: Yes. Bob Newhart is a wonderful guy, and so was everybody in his cast. They treated us very well.

CS: What do fans say to you when they meet you?

KIRBY: They stand around and stare at me [*laughs*]. I guess I'm sort of a mythic figure, because of my length in the field. I try to put people at their ease. Actually, I have a wonderful time with them.

CS: Do you have a moment in your career that you thought was your *greatest* accomplishment?

KIRBY: Yes, well, my 50th wedding anniversary was a high point of my life. I enjoyed that immensely, because I love my wife—our meeting was like a storybook meeting. She has made my life wonderful. I get carried away, my wife thinks I'm too sentimental.

Clobberin' now for over 30 years, the Thing first felt life through Kirby's pencils.

CS: What do you think of comic books today?

KIRBY: Comics today are wonderful. They get better paper [*laughs*]. They have a wide variety of stories. They're great to look at, but I haven't got the time to read too many of them. But they're extremely well done, and extremely well-produced. The young people putting them out have good concepts. It's a larger world with a larger series of happenings and prospects; that's reflected in them.

CS: What do you think of the world today?

KIRBY: The world can be turbulent and dangerous, considering the way these atom bombs are sold in all directions—there's an ominous cast to the world today. But I look forward to people being sensible. I hope the next generation forgets about what can spoil things for the world. I like to see people happy, all kinds of people. We've been through many trials and tribulations, and we deserve whatever happiness the future can bring us. I'm a guy with grandchildren, and I suppose there are many other fellas with grandchildren, and I want a safe world for *all* of them. So, I look forward to people using common sense, and keeping the kind of tranquil world that will help people prosper.

CS: Thanks so much for the many wonderful books you've drawn.

KIRBY: Thank you for reading my material and for liking it. Any good testimony I get, I'll take. CS

MAKING MARVELS

By DAVE GALVAN

Writing Darkman, Elvira & other comics is what Kurt Busiek loves doing.

Art: Neil Vokes/Terry Austin/Copyright & Trademark 1993 Jack Kirby/Courtesy Topps

An upcoming project is Busiek's work on the Topps Jack Kirby line. He'll be writing *Teenagents*.

Art: Michael Wm. Kaluta/Copyright & Trademark 1991 Harris Publications, Inc.

Busiek had *Vampirella* plotted out, but staff changes ended his involvement.

Once again this fall, it will be a time of Marvels. *That's when writer Kurt Busiek and painter Alex Ross take readers back to the early days of the Marvel Universe when heroes and villains created by the likes of Joe Simon, Jack Kirby, Bill Everett, Stan Lee and Steve Ditko first fought.*

For Busiek, this eagerly awaited mini-series will be a homecoming of sorts. He's an old Marvel hand, having served as Assistant Editor of Marvel Age, *Co-Editor of the short-lived* Open Space *and a sales department staffer. An ex-literary agent, computer programmer and genre journalist (for the now-defunct* Comics Feature*), Busiek brings wide experience to the scripting of comics. And like almost every writer in the field, he loves his work.*

COMICS SCENE: Did you always want to be a writer?

KURT BUSIEK: I wanted to be a writer from the time I was about five or six—my mother still has opening paragraphs of Oz novels I started writing back then. But I never finished anything, not until high school.

CS: Did you read comics as a kid?

BUSIEK: Here and there. The thing is, my parents didn't allow us to watch television, eat candy or read comics voraciously—not until we were old enough to ignore them. So, I grew up reading Oz and other children's books. I didn't start reading comics regularly until 1974, when I was in junior high. I think a big reason I became a writer is that, by the time I started reading comics, I had already developed a critical facility—I had a sense of what was good and what was bad, and an awareness that these things were actually written and drawn by people professionally.

In my senior year of college for a magazine production class, I did a term paper for which I interviewed Dick Giordano, who had recently become DC's editor-in-chief. After the interview, I asked him how I could apply as a writer, and Dick told me to send him script samples.

Now, what you usually hear from comics editors is, "Send plot springboards, no more than a paragraph, no more than a page." But Dick wasn't thinking that day or something, and he

The history of the Marvel Universe, from a bystander's perspective, comes alive this fall in *Marvels*, written by Kurt Busiek and painted by Alex Ross.

Art: TM & Copyright & Trademark 1993 Marvel Comics Entertainment Group

--AND DURANT'S GOING TO STAY DEAD!
GRAB THAT BEAM, JULIE!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF DURANT!
HIS--
--HIS HEAD--?
HIS... HEAD...
THAT'S RIGHT, DARKMAN --
-- WE'RE A MATCHED PAIR OF FREAKS NOW --
BUT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE, I'M PERFECTLY SUITED TO CLAMBERING AROUND ON GIRDERS LIKE THIS, YOU SEE --
--AND YOU'RE A SITTING DUCK!
WHUMP
Hukh

Though blown up real good in the film, villain Robert Durant makes a comeback, much to Darkman's dismay.

Art: Javier Saltares/Andrew Pepoy/Colors: Sarra Mossoff

Silver Star's revival is Busiek's other Topps project.

said script samples. So I went home and wrote four scripts: *Superman: The In-Between Years*, a *Supergirl*, a *Flash* and *Brave & the Bold*. I sent them in to Dick, who didn't have time to read them of course, so he handed them over to the appropriate editors. As a result, I got a try-out with Julie Schwartz for *Superboy* that didn't go anywhere, and I got work from Ernie Colon, doing a few *Green Lantern Corps* stories.

While I was writing those, I interviewed Tom DeFalco for *Comics Feature* and asked him for a shot at writing for Marvel. Because I was doing stuff for DC, I obviously knew *something*, so he let me do some backup stuff in *Marvel Team-Up* that never appeared, but while I was doing *that*, I found out that the writer who was supposed to take over *Power Man & Iron Fist* was months late on his first plot. So, I went home, wrote up a plot and sent it in to [then-Marvel editor] Denny O'Neil. I got a call from him—he wanted to buy it and use it. I sent him another, he bought that too. I did two more, and while I was still doing news reporting for *Comics Feature*, I was at the Marvel press conference where they announced that the new writer on *Power Man & Iron Fist* was Kurt Busiek! They hadn't told me yet.

I wrote *Power Man & Iron Fist* for a year, 12 issues. Since that time, I've made at least a part of my living every year from writing comics—some years more than others. That was over 10 years ago, and I've been writing full time for two or three years.

CS: Now, you're working on the Jack Kirby line of comics published by Topps.

BUSIEK: Topps licensed a whole bunch of concepts and characters from Kirby, and is turning them into superhero comics. The first two are *The Secret City Saga* and *Satan's Six* [see the Kirby interview in CS #34].

When *Satan's Six* ends, what takes its place on the schedule is *Teenagents*—that's the first one I'm writing. They're a team of four teenage superheroes from a mysterious hidden civilization who get stranded in *our* world. The Teenagents have a glorious history—the team has been around for hundreds of years. There are generation upon generation of Teenagents. Their job is to protect this mysterious hidden civilization, and also keep humanity from destroying the world—since that would mean the end for the hidden civilization as well. The surface world has never been allowed to know that the Teenagents really exist—everything that they get involved with has been explained away as the sort of stuff you see in the *National Enquirer* or the *Weekly World News*.

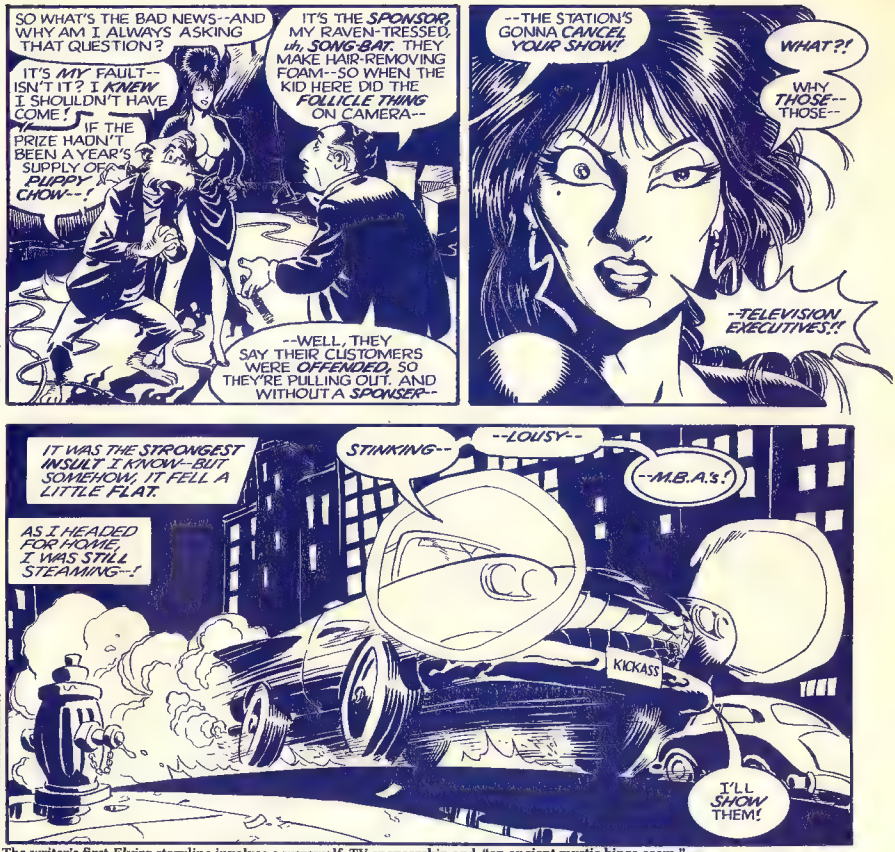
Tying into that is the series' major villain, Lord Ghast. He's sort of a weird cross between King Lear and Ben Cartwright on *Bonanza*.

CS: That's some combination!

BUSIEK: Well, I like to keep things lively. Lord Ghast has three daughters, all by different human women—so the set-up with the daughters is like King Lear, and the idea that they all had different mothers is *Bonanza*-ish. His eldest daughter lives on the Moon and commands an army of UFO aliens. His middle daughter lives underneath China and controls an army of insect people. And his youngest daughter still lives at home and controls an army of Elvis clones. So, any time you see reports of Elvis in a supermarket, it's their legions of Elvises spying on the surface world!

CS: And this is a *Kirby* creation?

BUSIEK: Yes. Well, Kirby didn't put Elvis into it, that was something that *I* did. I've never been interested in writing the same kind of comics everyone else is doing. If there's already a lot of stuff out there like it, why just add to the pile?


SO WHAT'S THE BAD NEWS--AND WHY AM I ALWAYS ASKING THAT QUESTION?
IT'S MY FAULT--ISN'T IT? I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME!
IF THE PRIZE HADN'T BEEN A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF PUPPY CHOW--!
IT'S THE SPONSOR, MY RAVEN-TRESSED, uh, SONG-BAT. THEY MAKE HAIR-REMOVING FOAM--SO WHEN THE KID HERE DID THE FOLLICLE THING ON CAMERA--
--WELL, THEY SAY THEIR CUSTOMERS WERE OFFENDED, SO THEY'RE PULLING OUT. AND WITHOUT A SPONSER--
--THE STATION'S GONNA CANCEL YOUR SHOW!
WHAT?!
WHY THOSE--THOSE--
--TELEVISION EXECUTIVES!!
IT WAS THE STRONGEST INSULT I KNOW--BUT SOMEHOW, IT FELL A LITTLE FLAT.
STINKING--
--LOUSY--
--M.B.A.'s!
AS I HEADED FOR HOME, I WAS STILL STEAMING--!
KICKASS
I'LL SHOW THEM!

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

Art: James W. Fry III

Art: Neil Vokes/Louis LaChance

The writer's first *Elvira* storyline involves a werewolf, TV sponsorship and "an ancient mystic bingo scam."

CS: This is a four-issue series. Who's drawing it?

BUSIEK: Neil Vokes and John Beatty. They're doing absolutely wonderful work—if you like Art Adams, Mike Mignola or Mike Golden, make sure to check it out! As you can tell, I'm very excited about the series. If it sells well enough, we may turn it into a regular series—which would suit me just fine.

I'm also going to be doing a revival of *Silver Star*, one of the Kirby titles once published by Pacific Comics. That will be a four-issue mini-series for Topps, with my old pal James W. Fry III as the penciller. If that does well, maybe that'll turn into a regular series, too.

CS: You've written a much-anticipated mini-series coming from Marvel in November, *Marvels*. How did this come about?

BUSIEK: The artist for *Marvels* is Alex Ross, an absolutely brilliant painter. Alex did *Terminator: The Burning Earth* back in the late '80s. He did an *Open Space* story, but the series got cancelled, and his story never got published. He went back into advertising.

When he decided he wanted to get back into comics, he called me because I had treated him well. Alex and I started throwing around ideas. I was invited to do a story for Eclipse's *Miracleman: Apocrypha*, and Alex is a big *Miracleman* fan, so I tried to arrange for him to paint that story. Through a series of mix-ups, he ended up doing a different story.

Anyway, Alex had done a series of painted portfolio plates of Marvel superheroes that he really liked, as part of a planned proposal. He wanted to do an anthology series of stories about these characters. I said, "What are we going to call the series, *'Ten Heroes Alex Likes?'* That's not really a concept." He said, "Well, I figure we could find one!" The idea we ultimately came up with was that this series, *Marvels*, would take these characters and show what it would be like to see who they are from a different perspective—from the standpoint of a normal inhabitant of the Marvel Universe.

When we see Spider-Man or the Human Torch in a comic, we know what they're thinking, what their private life is like. We know everything about them. If you actually were *in* the Marvel Universe, though, these guys would be celebrities like Robert Redford and Howard Hughes. You would have a different picture of them.

CS: Because the way the media paints the heroes, it would be exactly like

WELL, HI, AWFUL-ICIANADOS! IT'S YOUR HOST, ELVIRA -- SO ROUND, SO FIRM, SO FULLY-- NO, WAIT, THAT'S A GRAPEFRUIT COMMERCIAL.
ANYWAY, HERE I AM WITH ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE STARRING YOURS CRUELLY! I CALL IT...
CURSE & TELL!
BUT WHATEVER YOU CALL IT-- BLAME IT ON THESE GUYS--
THE END IS MONOTONOUS PICTURE
THEN-- THIS HOUSE-- IT'LL NEVER MENACE US AGAIN!
on air
DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THOSE CRASHING ORGAN CHORDS? ALWAYS LOUDEST IN THE LAMEST PICTURES-- LIKE A LAUGH TRACK ON A CREAMPUFF SITCOM!
DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME, KIDS-- PLAYING WITH YOUR ORGAN WHEN THINGS GET SLOW IS FOR TRAINED PROFESSIONALS ONLY!

Art: Neil Vokes/Louis LaChance/Courtesy Claypool Comics

Getting approval directly from Elvira is a nice change for Busiek. "If she says it's good, you know we're doing something right."

Hollywood.

BUSIEK: Also, there's a difference between seeing the Human Torch flying around thinking, "How am I going to make my rent this month, my girl friend doesn't like me and I'm thinking about quitting the team...," and seeing *a guy on fire* fly overhead, which would be terrifying! Seeing it from the perspective of his thoughts, aims and concerns humanizes the Torch, and makes him somebody you can sympathize with. But if you were really in that world, it would be a hell of a lot harder to sympathize with the Human Torch, because *he's a guy on fire, and he's right there!! Don't let him get near me!*

At the time, Alex had samples in at Eclipse for the *Miracleman* thing. They wanted him to do some Clive Barker stuff, so the editor sent his samples to Clive. Clive called Alex up and said, "This is great. I've sent your stuff to Marc McLaurin at Marvel, and I want you to do this big upcoming issue of *Hellraiser*." Marc got the stuff, which included the portfolio plates. and he asked, "What are these paintings of Marvel heroes? Is this for a specific project?" Alex said, "It's this thing Kurt Busiek and I have been throwing around. Would you be interested in a proposal?" Marc said, "You bet I would!"

So, I wrote a proposal, and it went through the Marvel editorial process and got changed around a bit. But all the way through, we stuck with that central idea of seeing the heroes as if you were in the Marvel Universe. We had done outlines for eight or nine stories involving our lead character, a reporter named Phil Sheldon, encountering each of these heroes that Alex wanted to do a story about, and getting perspectives of what they're like. It was Tom DeFalco who gave us the big change—he said, "Don't do the stories about the heroes. Do the stories about the *events*. Take major events from Marvel history, and show what it would be like to live though them."

CS: Where and how does the story begin?

BUSIEK: The first issue starts out in the '40s. We cover living in New York with World War II approaching, when the original Human Torch makes his debut, the Sub-Mariner makes his first appearance in New York and Captain America shows up.

The second issue is built around a two-track plot; first the wedding of Sue Storm and Reed Richards, and as counterpoint, the emergence of anti-mutant hatred and the Sentinels. In order for the continuity to make any sense, the Sentinels must appear for the first time that wedding day. On one hand, you have the Reed and Sue wedding, which is like the Marvel Universe version of the Charles and Diana wedding; major news, storybook romance, etc. And on the other hand, you have anti-mutant bigotry and mob violence against the X-Men. So, you have people treating some superheroes like celebrities and others like monsters. Why is it that Captain America is seen as a savior, and Cyclops as a monster?

The third issue takes place on the day of the first coming of Galactus, and the fourth issue takes place between the Kree/Skrull War and the day Gwen Stacy died.

CS: Over the series, the reporter character gets the entire scope of the Marvel Universe.

BUSIEK: At the series' end, we have a resolution for him, something that ties off his story, his involvement with the Marvels. Marc and I are talking about doing a second series, but if there is one, it'll be a *thematic* sequel—it'll focus around the same ideas, but have different leads. That would pick up shortly after the death of Gwen Stacy, and bring Marvel continuity up to the present day, or close to it. There's a third *Marvels* series I would like to do, but that's too far in the future to even think about right now.

Response to the art at conventions has been enormously gratifying. So, it might turn out to be bigger than even Alex or I thought it would.

CS: You have several other projects in the works.

BUSIEK: There are three graphic albums commemorating the 30th anniversary of Marvel's *Tales of Suspense*, *Tales to Astonish* and *Strange Tales*. I'm doing the *Strange Tales* graphic novel with a painter named Ray Lago. It features Dr. Strange, the Human Torch and the Thing, with a cameo by Nick Fury. It's set in the present day, but it involves flashbacks to stories that could have been published in the old *Strange Tales*. We also have a pre-superhero Kirby monster story vignette in which we bring back one of the goofiest-looking Kirby monsters from *Strange Tales*, Orrgo the Unconquerable! He's this fire-plug of a guy, all muscle and all mouth. Despite his appearance, though, he has mighty mental powers and can hypnotize the entire world.

I'm working on a *Spider-Man/X-Factor* graphic album to be drawn by Tom Lyle, but that's not scheduled yet. I'm also tentatively supposed to do a Doc Samson mini-series.

For Dark Horse I'm doing a series with Neil Vokes called *Jonny Demon*. It's about a young sorcerer who's not as good as he thinks he is, and his partner, an aged alcoholic vampire who can't stand the taste of blood, and their adventure in a post-apocalyptic world overrun by demons and monsters.

CS: You were writing *Vampirella*. What happened there?

BUSIEK: I was doing *Vampirella* when Richard Howell was the editor. Richard left the company [Harris Publications], and there were some

creative changes as the new people got going. I was asked to stay on for a while, but it just didn't work out. We didn't mesh, creatively or administratively. By the time that became clear, I had worked out a plot for the first major story, "The Dracula War," and scripted one-and-a-half issues of a projected five-issue story. Ultimately, they bought all of my plots, at least for "The Dracula War," and they're wrapping it up with a different writer.

I enjoyed doing *Vampirella*; she's a terrific character. It was just time to move on, rather than to bump heads, and end up with nobody being happy.

CS: You're also writing the *Darkman* comic for Marvel. It takes place a few months after the movie. What's Darkman doing?

BUSIEK: He's deranged! The way the movie ended, everybody he has ever been mad at is dead, his romance has been pretty effectively busted up and he's a complete wacko and homeless to boot, so he doesn't have any reason to fight crime or be any sort of a superhero. But he doesn't have anything else to do either. He's also nuts. Did I mention that?

The way the series opens, Darkman becomes convinced that Robert Durant [the movie's major villain] is still alive, despite the fact that he saw the helicopter that Durant was in blow up. He decides that Durant must still be alive, because if he wasn't, Darkman would *feel better*. So, he goes on a rampage through the underworld, trying to get them to admit that Durant is still alive, when of course he's dead. But it turns out that Durant isn't *quite* dead.

CS: They saved Durant's brain?

BUSIEK: I'll tell you this much. The one thing in my proposal that the movie studio *wouldn't* let me do is that I wanted to surgically transplant Durant's brain into the body of a gorilla. So, we would have a gorilla in a fancy suit with a tie pin, smoking cigars, very elegant—and being a crime lord. But they decided that it was too much.

The big thing I love is that *Darkman* is horror, but it's cranked up so far that it's funny. So, it's this horror crime series that you can't quite take seriously because it's over the top almost to the point of being ludicrous. I didn't want to lose that, so when [editor] Fabian Nicieza offered me the series, I told him I would do it only if I could do it tongue-in-cheek. I love the character and the movie—the movie never took itself too seriously. When Darkman has an emotional outburst, well, that's the kind of thing you see in comics all the time—Spider-Man is overwhelmed by angst and self-doubt. But with Darkman, it happens at a carnival in an argument over a stuffed elephant.

They make you laugh and sympathize at the same time. I want to maintain that atmosphere—to make sure that Darkman makes all the wrong choices, full speed ahead, and continues to get into situations where no self-respecting normal superhero would ever find himself.

One of the plotlines I'm doing is that Darkman, good caring individual that he is, tries to make sure his old girl friend is happy. He tries to get her involved in a new romance by going to the bedroom of this guy that she's interested in, waking him up in the middle of the night and rasping, "Date Julie Hastings. Date her or I will be

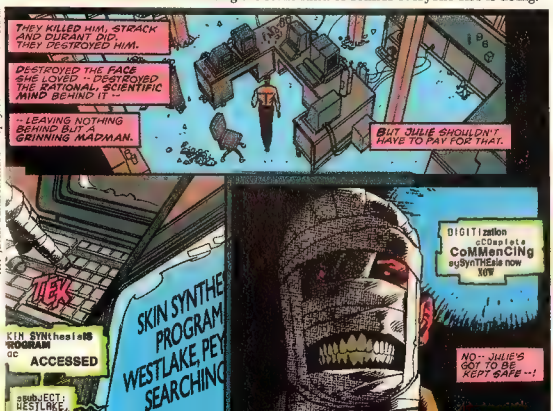
(continued on page 72)

INSTEAD, THEY BROUGHT HIM BACK
WE HAD TO SEVER HIS NERVES WITHIN THE SPINO-THALMIC TRACT--
HE NO LONGER FEELS PAIN.
BUT THERE ARE SIDE EFFECTS.
HIS EMOTIONS ARE AMPLIFIED, GIVING RISE TO ALIENATION.
LONELINESS.
UNCONTROLLED RAGE.
SURGES OF ADRENALINE FLOW UNCHECKED THROUGH THE BODY, GIVING HIM AUGMENTED STRENGTH.
NATURALLY, WE HOPE FOR FULL RECOVERY--
SHE STUCK HIM WITH A PIN, AND IT DIDN'T HURT. IT DIDN'T HURT AT ALL.
--BUT, PERSONALLY, I GIVE HIM A NINE ON THE BUZZARD SCALE.
OR WORSE
I WASN'T UNTIL LATER-- AFTER HE'D ESCAPED THAT THE PAIN BEGAN.
JUUU-LIEEE
ISS MEEEE
BUT THEN-- THEN IT HURT A LOT
N-No! STAY AWAY--
STAY AWAY!

All Darkman Art & Characters: Copyright & Trademark 1993 Universal City Studios Inc.

"It's this horror crime series that you can't quite take seriously because it's over the top almost to the point of being ludicrous," Busiek says of *Darkman*.

"I've never been interested in writing the same kind of comics everyone else is doing."


THEY KILLED HIM, STRACK AND DURANT DID. THEY DESTROYED HIM.
DESTROYED THE FACE SHE LOVED -- DESTROYED THE RATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC MIND BEHIND IT --
-- LEAVING NOTHING BEHIND BUT A GRINNING MADMAN.
BUT JULIE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO PAY FOR THAT.
THEK
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NO-- JULIE'S GOTTA BE KEPT SAFE --!

Art: Javier Saltares/Andrew Pepoy/Colors: Satra Mosscoff

THE QUINTESSENTIAL CAT & MOUSE

Tom & Jerry go to the movies—and this time, they have something to say.

The most predominant cartoon animals are cats and mice: Herman & Katnip, Itchy & Scratchy, Pixie & Dixie and Mr. Jinks, Snooper and Blabber, Courageous Cat & Minute Mouse, Mushmouse & Punkin Puss, Fievel & Tiger—but none have been as durable and popular as Tom and Jerry.

By BOB MILLER

For more than 50 years, the cat-and-mouse team have appeared in 150 theatrical shorts (seven of which earned Oscars), plus two live-action movies, three TV series and now, their very own animated feature.

You might expect that in *Tom and Jerry–The Movie*, they would be the stars, right? Such wasn't the case.

"There wasn't much of Tom and Jerry in the script," says art director Mike Peraza. "Most of the emphasis was put on two other characters, Puggsy and Frankie. Tom and Jerry had very, very little involvement or any motivation to do anything in the script. If this was gonna be a Tom and Jerry movie, Tom and Jerry should be involved in what's going on. If somebody's in trouble, they have to be the ones that get 'em out of it, or cause the trouble to begin with."

Peraza had been involved as an art director and stylist on such productions as *The Great Mouse Detective*, *The Little Mermaid*, *TaleSpin* and *Beauty & the Beast*. He left Disney to do some children's books and was called by production manager Mike Wolf in November 1990 to style *Tom and Jerry–The Movie*. Wolf gave him the script, which was written by Dennis (*Jetsons–The Movie*) Marks.

"It's a script that had been around for awhile," Peraza reveals. "To be honest, I wasn't real happy with it. It seemed more like a Saturday morning cartoon show, so we restructured the story. It's better. I'm still very picky about it. The story's the most important thing in *any* film, whether it's animated or live-action. There's motivation in there that I still question as far as why some characters do things.

"What happens is that Tom and Jerry meet a little girl, Robyn Starling, whose quest is to be reunited with her father, an explorer. He has been lost overseas in an accident, and now her guardian, Aunt Figg, sees a chance to take all the money from his estate.

"Tom and Jerry help Robyn," Peraza continues. "They find out the father is

Finding out that friends can be made of the weirdest pairings, Tom & Jerry team to help Robyn find her dad.

alive. At the same time, more people find out this girl is worth money. So, there's an *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*-like chase to get this girl, the Million Dollar Kid, and grab the reward posted by Aunt Figg.

"Personally," Peraza laments, "I wish we could have seen more Tom and Jerry gags in the line of *Itchy & Scratchy* or *Ren & Stimpy*. We pushed the Tom and Jerry envelope as far as we could, but I think we could have gone much further."

In all their cartoons, Tom and Jerry have rarely said a word. The reason, according to this film, is that they never had anything to say to one another—until *Tom and Jerry–The Movie*. So, why are they talking so much now?

"According to the script, we originally had a stray dog named Puggsy and his little sidekick, Frankie da Flea. Those two had more lines than anybody else in the [first] script, and I found that offensive," Peraza states. "Tom and Jerry are the stars. I was all for losing Puggsy and Frankie completely; they were redundant. It was explained to me [by the producers] that they needed Puggsy and Frankie to do the dialogue because Tom and Jerry couldn't talk.

"I said, 'Well, either we do it pantomime or with thought processes, *à lá Garfield*. But just to have a couple of redundant characters makes it boring. It splits the focus away from Tom and Jerry.' I didn't like that.

"The general consensus was that a film with the two major stars not talking couldn't really make it in this day and age. So, they had to have the two stars speak. I know there'll be friends of mine from other places giving me a hard time: 'They're speaking! You're selling 'em out, you dirty, rotten...' It was a good point. To have Tom and Jerry go through a whole feature and not speak, I think, would have seemed a little bit more of a handicap."

When the actors auditioned for the roles, their recordings were labeled with numbers rather than names, so the producers could select by voice rather than the celebrity's name.

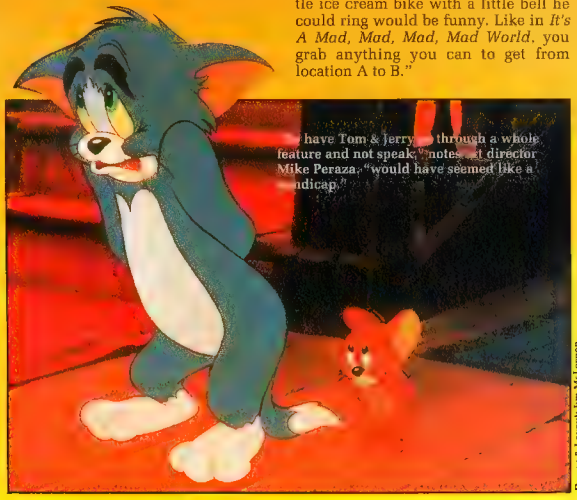
"With Tom and Jerry, we wanted voices just like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, whatever—something very recognizable. So, when you close your eyes, you think it's Tom and Jerry. We're still experimenting a little bit with Tom [Richard Kind], but we've got Jerry down pat. Jerry's actually a girl [Dana Hill], but it's kind of a nice, scratchy, very spunky voice."

The cast also includes Anndi McAfee as Robyn Starling, Henry Gibson as Dr. Applecheeks, Edmund Gilbert as Puggsy, David Lander as Frankie da Flea, Tony Jay as Lickboot the lawyer, Rip Taylor as Captain Kiddie, Howard Morris as Kiddie's hand puppet, Squawk, Michael Bell as Ferdinand and Charlotte (*The Facts of Life*) Rae as the greedy Aunt Figg.

"Charlotte tried out for Ursula on *The Little Mermaid*," Peraza recalls. "Pat Carroll did a great job with the final voice, but I thought Charlotte was also outstanding. I mentioned her when we started *Tom and Jerry*, and [the producers] were like, 'Oh gee, I don't know.' So, I said, 'Listen to the voice.' They listened and said, 'God, she really *does* sound pretty frightening.' We tried Tony Jay and Charlotte together, and they were just a match made in heaven."

Peraza reports that "everybody in the film has a car; they wanted a *Wacky Races* type of race. That's fine for Saturday morning, but I wanted to give the characters something that would come out of their personalities.

"When you see the chase in the film, Figg is driving a Jaguar-type classic car—fast and very expensive-looking. Daddy Starling has an executive jet helicopter, which fits somebody of his wealth and standing. Applecheeks has a fast, big truck, but he's soon dropped off by his partners-in-crime 'cause they want the money for themselves. He steals an ice cream bike. I thought the contrast of giving him a little ice cream bike with a little bell he could ring would be funny. Like in *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, you grab anything you can to get from location A to B."



Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

Ferdinand, Aunt Figg's scruffy, gluttonous pooch, gives our heroes a run for their money as the pursuit for Robyn begins.

According to Peraza, "The original script had a fat southern sheriff driving a jeep. I had had it up to *here* with fat southern sheriffs. I convinced Phil [Roman, and Joe [Barbera] to instead make him a captain, Captain Kiddie, and he has this hand-puppet, and a broken-down but festive looking water carnival boat.

"The puppet, Squawk, is a separate personality. Captain Kiddie is kind of a nice, generous fella, but Squawk is his alter ego. It's his dark side, a little bit of Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen meets 'Dr. Strangeglove,' 'cause he's not always in control of this puppet. That way, each character had something built out of the personality, so we could push the gags."

Tom and Jerry were the creations of Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera, the writer/director team who began their partnership at MGM in 1937. Hanna and Barbera utilized the old adage that actions speak louder than words; hence, they relied on slapstick, precision timing and fully animated "acting" to carry the story without the use of dialogue. Beginning with "Puss Gets the Boot" (1940), Hanna and Barbera produced a total of 114 Tom and Jerry cartoons. Of 12 Academy Award nominations, seven won Oscars. The cat and mouse were later directed by Gene Deitch, Chuck Jones, Abe Levitow, Tom Ray and Ben Washam.

On television, the pair were reduced to limited animation in Hanna-Barbera's *The Tom and Jerry/Grape Ape/Mumbly Show* (1975) and Filmation's *Tom and Jerry Show* (1980). In 1987, the Turner Entertainment Company announced a *Tom and Jerry* movie, to be produced by Hanna-Barbera, while Turner commissioned Hanna-Barbera in 1990 to make *The Tom and Jerry Kids*, juniorized mutations for the Fox Network.

The film project, fully financed, moved to Film Roman, which had been producing only made-for-TV cartoon series like *Garfield & Friends*, specials and commercials.

"Joe Barbera originally came up with this whole idea and took it around to a few different places," says Peraza. "He's the executive consultant on this film. Joe has been with us for everything, helping pick and choose all the voices, listening to all the songs, giving the OK's when Henry [*The Pink Panther*] Mancini writes the music or Leslie [*Hook*] Bricusse does the lyrics. He has input on the story and the business and the gags. And he really has to, because he—along with Bill Hanna—were Tom and Jerry's creators, and there's nobody alive who knows Tom and Jerry better."

When I was little, I used to go out and see films like *101 Dalmatians*," Peraza recalls. "It's always a special treat to see an animated Disney film. Something about it always made me feel like I was entering a different world. Animation took you away from everything else, no matter what was going on in your life. You spent an hour-and-a-half in a dark theater enjoying a completely different adventure. It was wonderful."

In 1973, Peraza moved to California. In 1976, he enrolled in the character animation program at Cal Arts in Valencia, later earning a Disney scholarship. He eventually began working at the studio and became an art director on *The Great Mouse Detective*, in which he did designs for the title sequence, the toy shop, Basil's flat and the Big Ben sequence, in which Basil of Baker Street has his climactic battle with the evil Ratigan. He then left Disney to work on outside projects, such as the *Dragon's Lair* and *Space Ace* game animation for Don Bluth.

"I don't think the world of animation begins and ends with Disney," he says. "There are many things out there. Disney does a great job for traditional animation, and I think they're expanding their horizons, thank goodness."

Peraza cites his non-Disney influences as the works of Hayao (*Castle of Cagliostro, Laputa: Castle in the Sky*) Miyazaki, John (*Ren & Stimpy*) Kricfalusi, Will (*Claymation*) Vinton and Bluth. "Animation owes quite a lot to people like Don Bluth, to be honest. Disney animation was stagnating, and when Don left to form his own renegade group of incredibly-talented peo-

ple, he proved with *The Secret of NIMH* that you could still get very high production value if you had the right artists and the right people in charge."

Peraza later returned to Disney to do several projects: "I was doing general development for Disney TV, but at night, I ended up doing styling on *Little Mermaid*, and then during the morning, before I came in to work at *DuckTales*, I would go over to Amblin on *Roger Rabbit*.

"I met with Bob Zemeckis a few times, and I was doing designs on Toon Town. Very shortly into this arrangement, I was told by Don Hahn and Peter Schneider, 'Well, you can't work on *all* these things; you gotta make a choice what you want to do.'

"John Musker and Don Hahn presented me with the idea of working on *The Little Mermaid* at the wrap party for *Great Mouse Detective*. I read the script and thought it was good. Both John and Ron Clements had had background in animation, but the script proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that they're actually great story guys too. Also, it was a chance to work with them again and try to do better."

So, Peraza decided to work on *Mermaid* as art director (sharing credit with Donald A. Towns). "One regret I had on that was, originally I did a number of watercolor keys, and I wanted a *Pinocchio* feel to it, a very rich look. We tried auditioning all the background painters we could find, people working for us in-house and people on the outside, and we could hardly find anyone who could do the old watercolor technique. So, we weren't able to get the kind of rich look in the film that I really wanted.

"I was disappointed with the lack of richness in *Little Mermaid*, but I was very happy because the story was so well done, and the songs blew me away. Working with people like Howard Ashman and Alan Menken was just terrific. They contributed heavily by writing such great songs. They didn't just sit there, stop and say, 'Wait a minute, folks, we're gonna stick a song in here.' The songs told the story. Howard really was the heart behind *Little Mermaid*."

After doing preliminary designs for *Beauty & the Beast*, Peraza returned to Disney's TV animation division to design concepts for *Darkwing Duck*, *Goof Troop* and *TaleSpin*, for which he designed the logo and incorporated some computer animation. After another break from Disney, he was then called to art-direct *Tom and Jerry–The Movie*, which, he says, "has been a lot of fun. I've met some great people.

"We didn't have the big budget or much time to do it, but you try to do the best you can. I'm really proud of the whole group because we've put it together out of nothing.

"I'm just looking forward to all the new things we're gonna be doing," Mike Peraza says. "I'm hoping we can embrace computer technology even more. Live action has gone on and hit new plateaus, whereas animation has stagnated too much. Now, I hope we'll make up for lost time." 63

Surprise, surprise! They can talk. And apparently Tom & Jerry could speak all along, they just never had *anything* to say.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

Of the *Tom & Jerry* team, Peraza says, "I'm really proud of the whole group."

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C-3PO shown actual size.
Photo by Bill DeMichele

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs

With intricate detail, Mark Schultz weaves stunning "Xenozoic Tales."

□

By PHILIP NUTMAN

□

Creating a self-contained world composed of your favorite dramatic elements and bringing it to life in a comic book is an achievement in itself. Inventing a world of real-life characters with a readership enamored enough to follow their adventures month after month is a whole other ball game. For every Frank Castle or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, there's a dozen John Does of Planet X.

Of course, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby went one better and created an entire universe. More recently, Frank Miller designed *Sin City*, and in 1982, in Pennsylvania, commercial illustrator Mark Schultz imagined the future he termed the Xenozoic. While drawing pictures of lawnmowers, the young artist daydreamed about big, beautiful '50s cars, a gorgeous heroine called Hannah Dundee, and dinosaurs by the dozen.

Quitting advertising, Schultz put pen to paper, and those daydreams became a reality. Thanks to independent publisher Kitchen Sink Press, comics readers got to share that reality, too. Soon, Schultz achieved critical acclaim, won a prestigious Harvey award, and *Xenozoic Tales*, a world 600 years into the future of Cadillacs and dinosaurs, became one of comicdom's most popular black and white books.

"I'm a frustrated storyteller," Schultz admits. "And back when I was doing commercial art, I used to

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs: Trademark General Motors Corporation

All Art: Copyright 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 Mark Schultz

GREEN AIR
SURE, JACK.
ALL SAILPLANES MUST MOVE FORWARD TO STAY ALOFT. ONCE I'M UP, GRAVITY WILL BEGIN PULLING ME IN A SHALLOW DOWNHILL COAST--ONE FOOT DOWN FOR EVERY 23 FORWARD...
TO STAY UP, I NEED LIFT... GREEN AIR. THE SUN WARMS THE EARTH, WHICH IN TURN THROWS COLUMNS OF HEATED AIR TO THE SKY. THESE THERMAL UPDRAFTS WILL PUSH ME BACK UPSTAIRS.
NICE DAY FOR SOARING, REMRO!
EXCELLENT DAY FOR SOARING!
WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN BE SO SURE OF SOMETHIN' YOU CAN'T SEE...
OH, SHE WILL!
AND I WON'T PROMISE YOUR PLANE WILL EVEN GET OFF THE GROUND...
YOUR RESTORATION IS FLAWLESS, JACK. YOU'VE EXECUTED ALL MY SPECIFICATIONS PRECISELY!
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME AGAIN HOW THIS IS SUPPOSED TO WORK...
THANKS AND PRAISE BE TO ALL THE MECHANICAL SPIRITS IN THE WASSOON VERNACULAR!
MARK SCHULTZ '88
2

All kinds of dinosaurs exist in Mark Schultz's Xenozoic world, whether they're Cadillacs or pterodactyls.

ask myself, 'If I got to do comics for a living, what would I do?' Inevitably, the things I loved influenced me. The adventure stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, *King Kong* and other '30s movies like *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the *Mad Max* films—especially *The Road Warrior*. All this stuff started tumbling around in my brain. I combined them—and, over several years, I evolved the notion of the Xenozoic."

The Xenozoic era is chaotic and post-apocalyptic. By the late 20th century, drastic ecological changes forced mankind to seek shelter beneath Earth's surface. By 2020, cataclysmic geologic upheavals caused the planet's surface to churn. Billions died. Some 450 years later, when the survivors return to the surface, they discover an illogical world in which dinosaurs roam and Cadillacs still run. Working from this premise, Schultz has found a rich mythology and loyal audience.

Since Schultz had spent much of his childhood drawing dinosaurs, they were an obvious choice to populate his strange new world. "I remember being attracted to dinosaurs before I developed an interest in anything else. I discovered a book about them when I was four or five years old and was immediately captivated," the writer/artist recalls. "This was around the time that the giant monster movie cycle was still going, films like *Gorgo* [1961], and the advertisements excited me. I wanted to see these movies, but was too young. I wanted to know what these huge creatures were. My parents got me a book from the library, and it was incredible—these creatures existed before man; they were *real*! That knowledge leaves a big impact on a child's imagination.

"Dinosaurs are the dragons of the scientific age," Schultz notes. "The symbol of the dragon reverberates in the human subconscious. I don't know why, but there's obviously a need that that symbol fulfills. As a species, we've evolved to a point where we can't accept dragons as a supernatural force anymore, but we know dinosaurs existed due to the physical evidence. They definitely touch a primal nerve in our collective imagination. Kids love them, and there are very few adults who aren't interested in them. You only have to pick up a copy of *Discover* magazine to see that's true. Nearly every issue has an article on dinosaurs or some related topic. People love learning about them."

Growing up around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Schultz had access to one of the greatest dinosaur exhibits in the world, housed in the Carnegie Natural History Museum. He remembers his first visit with great affection. "The exhibit which impressed me the most was the tyrannosaurus skeleton. It towered above me, and as a little kid, coming face to face with something of that size was incredible, both terrifying and awe-inspiring."

But dinosaurs are only one element of what makes *Xenozoic Tales* so attractive to readers, and to Schultz himself. Aside from the story's science fiction and adventure aspects, there are great cars and the statuesque scientist Hannah Dundee, the kind of slinky, gutsy heroine no tale should be without. *Xenozoic*, however, isn't just a romp through the artist's obsessions. It's a solid, character-driven drama. Part of the book's charm comes from the tension between Dundee, an emissary from the city of Wassoon (Washington DC), and mechanic/shaman Jack "Cadillac" Tenrec, a resident of the City in the Sea (the ruins of New York), as they explore their world.

"Before I came up with the concept, I really never paid attention to cars that much," confesses the artist. "I just loved the designs of that period. The late '40s/early '50s, were, I think, the high point for automotive design. I know nothing about the workings of those cars, but I love the way they look. They were the dinosaurs of the automotive industry—

THE GROWING POOL
THIS IS A STORY ABOUT LIFE AND MYSTERY AND FACTS.
HARD FACTS...AS BRIGHT AND PELLUCID AS A BRANCHING BLUE AS SLIPPERY AND HARD TO GRASP AS A MOSSY RIVERSTONE...
...AND ASSUMED FACTS... DEVIOUS AND SUBVERSIVE...OFFERING NO RESISTANCE AS THEY SLITHER SWALLOW YOU
NO ONE HOLDS A MONOPOLY ON THE FACTS... AND THAT'S A FACT
BEFORE WE BEGIN, LET'S SLIP BACK FOR A MOMENT...BEFORE THE CONTINENTS BUCKLED AND ERUPTED...
BACK DURING THE EARLY DISASTERS, WHEN THE POISONED ATMOSPHERE WENT BERSERK AND THE SEAS ROSE...LET'S SLIP BACK IN TIME TO A LONG SUBMERGED ISLAND NATION
THANKS TO LEVELS AND LUFTBALL, WHOSE SALVE MENDS THE TWISTED AND MAIMED.

All Art: Mark Schultz/Courtesy Kitchen Sink Press

Despite appearances, Schultz doesn't want his stories to come off as "stupid and sexist when it comes to depicting female characters."

Even though Jack and Hannah do some soul-searching in future *Xenozoic Tales*, "There'll be dinosaur fights along the way," Schultz promises.

big, grandiose, streamlined creatures. They represented an evolutionary peak before the industry stopped paying attention to good design and went for gimmicks. But for four or five years, cars were incredibly beautiful, well-designed machines."

Schultz's style has also attracted a loyal following. Anyone familiar with classic EC Comics like *Tales from the Crypt* and *Weird Science* can immediately tell which great artists have had the most influence on Schultz's work. The original *Xenozoic* stories echo the mood and style of Wally Wood, with more than a passing nod to early Frank Frazetta. Later issues tip their hat to Al Williamson, Alex Raymond and *Prince Valiant* creator Hal Foster, all of whom Schultz readily admits are leading lights in his artistic canon. It's this classic comic-book aesthetic which has won Schultz both critical praise and the admiration of fans and professionals.

"I've never really had much of an option to work in color," he reveals. "And to do what I want to do, I've pretty much been restricted to working in black and white. I enjoy it—I love black and white films—and I try to use it as a positive quality instead of a drawback. I try to emphasize the composition, the atmosphere, lighting effects, things I feel can be lost with color. In this respect, Al Williamson has been a big influence on me, particularly his *Secret Agent X-9* strips, which showed me how to use black and white to its fullest potential. Also Alex Raymond's *Rip Kirby*. Once I started paying attention to those works, I realized there are certain things you can do in color, and techniques you must use for black and white. You can't carelessly use one or the other, you have to focus on techniques and compositions which work well in black and white.

"The greatest teachers in the world are Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. Although much of their work appeared in color, when you see the black and white originals, you realize what masterful technicians they were. The art without the color stands on its own, and you can't say that about a lot of comics artwork being produced today. Alex Toth is another great example. He worked with color much of the time, but he would leave open areas for color without a black line around it—those kinds of tricks. He was very conscious of what he was doing and how color would affect his work."

Schultz has a formal background in art and graduated from college with a BFA in painting, but admits he doesn't use most of what he learned at school. For the type of art which brings *Xenozoic* to life, his study of Williamson, Raymond and Toth's work has been invaluable. "It's ironic, most of my art education was working with paint and color, and I've almost totally jettisoned that part of my training. Unfortunately, I didn't learn much about the fundamentals of draughtsmanship when I was in college, so it has really been on-the-job training for me while I've been doing the book. I try to learn more about drawing with each issue. There are always a few problems I have to solve, so every issue is an artistic challenge."

Schultz admits he's a slow worker. On a good week, he can produce two fully-pencilled pages. "It's hard enough to bring the human body to life, but in addition to that, I make it tough on myself, because my favorite kinds of stories are filled with little details. *Prince Valiant*'s a great example. Hal Foster always had his characters doing something, even if it was only everyday stuff. I like my characters to be involved in things because it brings them to life. Working with that kind of detail takes time, especially if you produce fully-realized pencils, the way I do. It would be different if I just had a fistfight every two pages."

The results justify the time he takes. Every panel of a *Xenozoic* story is lovingly crafted. The downside, however, is that he only produces one or two issues a year. For most books, such a long wait between installments would guarantee dwindling sales and the kiss of death. Fortunately, that's not the case with *Xenozoic*, and Schultz

Hannah's return to Wassoon means political intrigue and danger for her and Jack.

Cars meant little to Schultz before he introduced Hannah and Jack to a world of Cadillacs and dinosaurs.

Orenda
WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THESE LAKES?
WELL, THEY'RE VOLCANIC CRATERS THAT DID GROUND WATER! THEY VARY IN DEPTH
"Let's head back to Orenda."
HOLD ON A MINUTE

is heartened by the loyalty of the book's core readership.

"I've tried working faster, but I'm not comfortable," he says. "If I did try to get more issues out, the quality would suffer. If I'm going to invest as much time and energy as it takes to produce a comic book, then I'm going to use that time and energy to produce something I'm happy with. Denis Kitchen is the kind of publisher who would rather see something done well than rushed to meet a deadline, and I'm very fortunate to have faithful readers who'll put up with my inability to do more issues a year."

First and foremost, Schultz produces *Xenozoic Tales* to satisfy his need to tell stories and please himself. "I think people respond favorably when they can see the artist really enjoys what he's doing, that the quality of work is important to the creator. Perhaps that's why the readers are so loyal. They can see the love I invest in the book."

What *Xenozoic*'s creator finds most satisfying about audience response is the number of people who care about the title's ecological underpinnings and appreciate his presentation of Hannah Dundee as a real woman. "Action and adventure stories have always been a bit stupid and sexist when it comes to depicting female characters," he observes. "And while I don't want to use the word feminist in relation to the book, I definitely try to bring a sense of equality to the characters of Jack and Hannah. I mean, *Xenozoic* is very much a 'guilty pleasure' comic—action, adventure, curvaceous women, a firm-muscled hero with a square jaw—in the old pulp tradition, but I don't want it to be as stupid or sexist as most of those stories were. Probably the biggest influence on me are the old Edgar Rice Burroughs books—*Tarzan, John Carter of Mars*, all that stuff, but, when it comes down to the way Burroughs presents women, it's so much crap. He could never get beyond that Victorian notion that a woman is just there to be rescued and adore the hero.

"But then, there's a second camp of readers who seem to purely love the book for its artwork. These are people who really love the EC style and are very happy someone is working in that manner. I don't know whether they actually read the stories or just look at the art. Either way, if they enjoy it, that's fine."

One of the best reasons to recommend *Xenozoic Tales* is to watch Schultz's talent as a storyteller grow. As he has found his feet as a writer, his characters have taken on a greater depth and for the next few issues, starting with #12, Schultz intends to explore Hannah and Jack's motivations.

"Events are going to get much more complex with this issue. Jack and Hannah arrive in Wassoon and there's political intrigue going on," reveals the author. "The Wassoon leaders are plotting to win Jack over to their side, but he's about to undergo a spiritual nervous breakdown. Once he goes through this, he'll have to rebuild himself and take a hard look in the mirror and find out if he likes what he sees. Jack also has to face up to the fact that he needs to become a true shaman rather than the pseudo-spiritual leader he has been in the past. At the same time, Hannah examines her reasons for what she does. She has basically been a tool in the hands of the Wassoon leaders, and she's going to question why she has allowed herself to be used."

If all this sounds less than exciting, worry not. "There'll be dinosaur fights along the way," promises Schultz. "And Jack's ultimate goal will be to return to the City in the Sea and oust the villains who have taken control during his trip to Wassoon. I'm attempting to give the characters more depth while developing some major dramatic conflicts and give the story more substance. It's certainly the biggest challenge I've set myself as a storyteller."

And the book's dramatic scope isn't the only thing expanding in the coming months. Since Kitchen Sink has now entered into an agreement with General Motors to license the use of the word Cadillac, a wide range of *Xenozoic Tales* merchandising will soon appear, beginning with a limited edition seriograph print. Issue #12 also marks the first use of the book's subtitle. From now on,

(continued on page 72)

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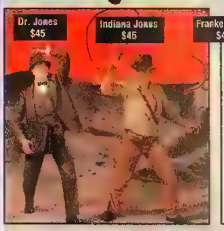

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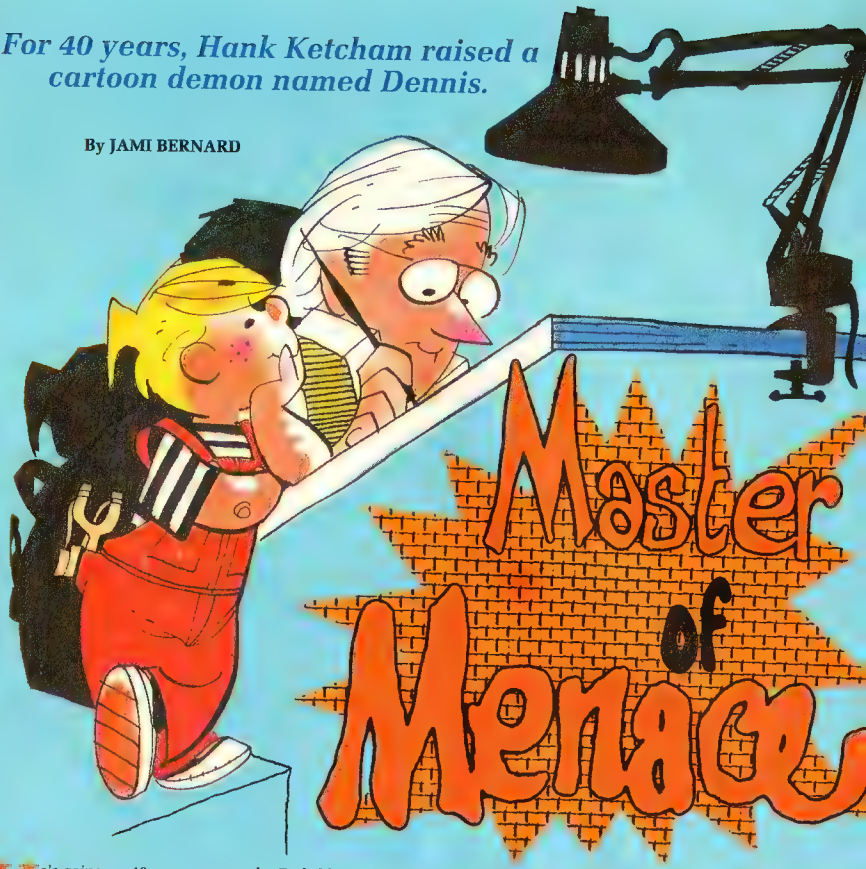
For 40 years, Hank Ketcham raised a cartoon demon named Dennis.

By JAMI BERNARD



He's going on 40 years now, and yet Dennis the Menace isn't getting any older. Or younger. He's still five-and-a-half, and that's the way it's always going to be.

Hank Ketcham, however, can't keep time from catching up with him. Dennis' creator is looking forward to the Menace's Golden Anniversary 10 years from now, at which time Ketcham himself will be 80—but the cartoonist has maintained his boyish, lantern-jawed good looks, and the subject of the cartoon panel that made him famous still gets him going.

"The characters in the panel are part of my family," he says. "They're always up to something new and challenging, and I'm very much interested in what they're doing. I don't know what I would do, really, if I weren't very much involved in their lives. Probably spend more time painting or writing, but I'm an old racehorse still walking around in the harness with the jinglebells, still good legs and able to run around the track. So, yes, I look forward to a 50th."

Meanwhile, to celebrate the Menace's 40th, Ketcham recently wrote an autobiography, *The Merchant of Dennis*, and a compilation of his favorite panels through the years. Both books are from Abbeville Press.

Dennis the Menace is the little boy with the big smile and the slingshot in his back pocket, wreaking havoc on the nerves of his neighbor Mr. Wilson, or on his parents, or on his shaggy pet dog. He talks back, says the darndest things and manages to stir up trouble wherever he goes, whether it's dropping a frog into a birthday punch or making outrageous bedtime prayers.

When Ketcham talks about Dennis, he's speaking solely about the cartoon. But the inspiration for Dennis the Menace was Ketcham's first child, the real Dennis, a deceptively angelic-looking boy with a round face and tousled blond hair. Ketcham chose the name "Mitchell" at random, but the other names for the panel's characters were chosen with someone in mind: Wilson was Ketcham's Sunday School superintendent, Margaret his schoolboy crush, Wade the local grocer. Gina Gillotti was named partly after the voluptuous Italian actress and partly as an homage to the No. 170 Gillotte pen-point Ketcham draws with.

Dennis Ketcham got to name the dog with the first word that came to mind—Ruff—but otherwise had little to do with the cartoon that bears his name.

Inspiring the comic strip that made his father famous was something the real-life Dennis would live to regret.

All Dennis Art: Hank Ketcham

"Dennis has changed physically over the years," his creator notes, certainly from this, his first appearance.

From the beginning, *Dennis the Menace* has been a particularly sunny strip, but it didn't accurately reflect the Ketcham household. *The Merchant of Dennis* alludes to troubles, but you must read between the lines to understand just how deep they were. The fact that the real Dennis is hardly mentioned, except for noting that at eight years old, he had "severe learning disabilities that were not being properly addressed by the family." Ketcham's wife was apparently an alcoholic and a drug abuser, who "succumbed shortly after her 40th birthday."

It's hard to tell whether the real Dennis was more a brat than any ordinary child, or whether Hank and his late wife, Alice, were just ill-prepared as young marrieds to deal with a baby. "All four- or five-year-olds are the same, no matter where they come from, all over the world," claims Ketcham now. "They're little computers that must be programmed. They're little animals that haven't been here before, and so they're looking under a rock to find out what's under there. They put their arm into the puddle to see how deep and dirty it is. They're just learning. So, of course, it's terrible for the adult, who doesn't have the patience to put up with that."

In hindsight, he recommends that parents have more than one child. "One is much more difficult, and it's not really too good a deal for the child, because he spends a lot of time by himself and gets into all kinds of strange situations and gets bored."

Ketcham's ambivalence for his son began much earlier, and continues to this day. In *The Merchant of Dennis*, he recalls a car trip with "a rambunctious two-and-a-half-year-old in the back seat [who] saved us from becoming bored. Seething with rage and frustration perhaps, but never bored."

He describes Dennis at age four as "too young for school, too big for his playpen, too small to hit, not old enough for jail—and 100 percent anti-establishment."

An incident that year got Ketcham's creative juices flowing. "The little darling was supposed to be taking a nap," Ketcham recalls. "Instead, he had spent the better part of one hour quietly dismantling his room. When the accidental load he carried in his underpants was added to his collection of plastic toys, cookie crumbs, and a leftover peanut butter sandwich, it formed an unusual mix."

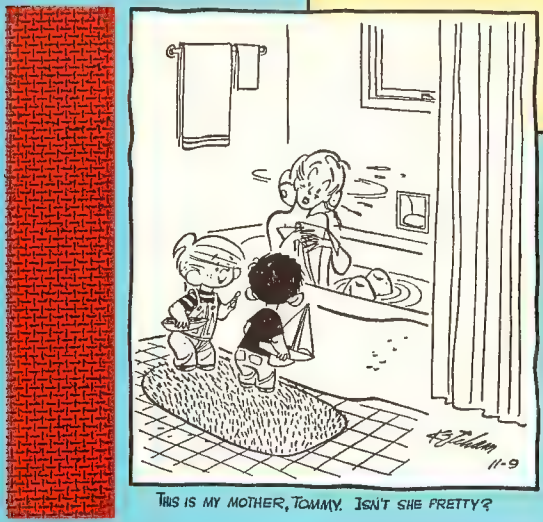
Alice yelled at her husband, "Your son is a *menace*!"

And on March 14, 1951, Dennis Ketcham forever became a pale imitation of his adopted brother, Dennis the Menace, a cartoon he grew to despise.

"He didn't understand the cartoons," says Ketcham now. "Well-meaning adults would pat him on the head and say, 'Well, Dennis, what are you going to do to Mr. Wilson today?' Dennis had an identity crisis there for a number of years. He grew out of it, but it wasn't easy. When his mother died, it put another crimp into it."

All Dennis Art & Photos: Merchant of Dennis/Abbeville Press

One of Dennis' earliest escapades.



Dennis was 10 when his mother died, an eerie parallel to his father's childhood. Hank's mother died when he was 12, but these shared experiences didn't bring father and son any closer. "Dennis was on his own from the time he was 10 years old, with boarding school and the Marine Corps, and living with friends in various parts of the midwest. And my life changed, too. I was in Europe for 18 years, so our paths just divided that way."

When Ketcham remarried, his son was best man, but "we've just gone our separate ways, so communication is down to a very minimal." Did Dennis become a cartoonist? "I wish he was a cartoonist," Ketcham says. "He has his own life, and he's living quite apart from mine. He's in Ohio. He has been married and divorced, and going from one job to another."

Ketcham speaks about his first child with the measured, resigned voice that comes from an old, deep wound. He mentions the case of the cartoonist Winsor McCay, whose son "grew up to be an old man still living in the shadow of his father's work, with an identification crisis. So, good, bad or indifferent, this is the way the cookie crumbled, and it's *not* the way I had envisioned, or hoped, but it is the way it *happened*."

He chalks it up to a lifetime of "misunderstanding, miscommunication, being on a different level intellectually. I don't dwell on it at all. I have my own life to lead, and I'm very happy. I hope that he is too. When he has any kind of problems, needs any help, he's Johnny-on-the-spot, he's in touch with me. So, he knows that I'm there to support him when he runs into any problems."

With his second wife, Ketcham has two children, Dania, 18, and Scott, 14. "They keep me pretty well-versed as to what's going on in the youth of America," says Ketcham, who clearly has a more relaxed life with his second family.

Maybe that's reflected in the particular changes his cartoon panel has undergone over the years.

"Like most cartoons, Dennis has physically changed over the years. If you look back at the '50s and compare it to what's done now, there's quite a bit of difference that even the most casual reader could discern, but you can say that about *Donald Duck*, *Blondie* or *Peanuts*, too. So, if I wanted to reuse some of the old material, some pretty funny stuff, I would have to redraw it, because people wouldn't recognize it as being Dennis or his family."

For instance, Dennis was originally designed as a sort of dwarf, perhaps a hangover from Ketcham's days working for the animation studio that made the Seven Dwarfs famous. "He was around two-and-a-half heads high, completely out of any pleasant proportion." says Ketcham. "I just changed him around and modified his hairdo. His mother has become more attractive, his dad not quite such a nerd. They don't yell at each other as much. They take Dennis a little bit more graciously, and with more of a sense of humor. What I've done, I guess, is surround myself with people that I enjoy in a neighborhood in which I feel comfortable, and if someone doesn't fit in, I just erase him. So, I control my environment with a pencil and an eraser."

Those are chilling words taken in context with Ketcham's relationship to the real Dennis, but then, Ketcham has his own childhood demons to contend with.

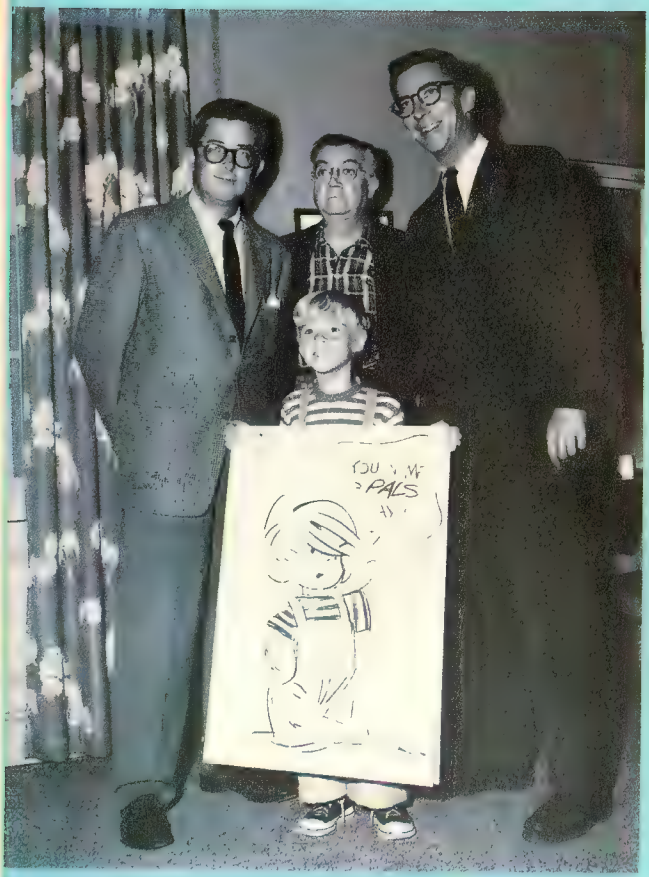
Hank and his younger sister, Joan,

"LOOK, KID, I DON'T MIND YA DIPPIN' IN MY POPCORN, BUT WIPE YOUR HAND ON YOUR *OWN* PANTS, SEE?"

Dennis goes to the movies during the 1960s, and gets a reaction he would probably still get today.

"BEANS AN' HOT DOGS AGAIN! GEE, MOM COULD SURE LEARN A LOT ABOUT COOKIN' FROM *YOU*!"

All Dennis Art: Copyright 1990 Hank Ketcham Enterprises



Hank Ketcham meets the TV counterparts of Mr. Wilson, Henry Mitchell and Dennis (Joseph Kearns, Herbert Anderson and Jay North). The artist loved the series at first but grew to hate it.

in conservative straight-arrow in me that pops to the surface like Old Faithful, especially where children are concerned. There's a behavior I expect, certain codes of dress and etiquette I demand, and areas of language and respect I insist upon. Somewhat chagrined, I have to admit that I *am* beginning to sound like an echo of my father."

Raised in Seattle, Hank Ketcham first became interested in cartoons when a friend of his father showed him how to use tracing paper. To Ketcham, it was like magic, and his first cartoons were ones he had traced so often that he had them memorized. But the illustrator was more interested in moving pictures—more specifically, in animation—and he left college early to go to California and knock on Disney's door.

Disney didn't answer Ketcham's knock, however, at least, not right away. He eventually found some work with the Walter Lantz Studio as an inbetweener, doing the drawings that link the cartoon characters' extremes of movement. Eventually, Ketcham got a foot in that Disney door as a temp worker on *Pinocchio*, for $25 a week.

Ketcham initially joined the famous Disney animators' strike in 1941, but since he was single and had no commitments, his enthusiasm for the strike waned. He crossed his picket line and became a scab worker, which resulted in bitter feelings among his colleagues.

He dodged the draft, but not the war, by artificially raising his blood pressure on a diet of cucumbers so as to get out of the Army, hoping instead to enlist in the Navy—which he did,

Whether they like it or not, Ketcham isn't about to let the Wilsons ever move out of the house next door to Dennis'.

were "two normal, well-behaved, insecure, terrified kids." As well-behaved as they were, their father was a strict disciplinarian, a Navy man who swatted them around the ankles with a horsewhip. Ketcham recalls it now as no big deal, but admits in his autobiography that his sister "insists I screamed bloody murder."

Ketcham's childhood also coincided with the Depression and Prohibition, two negative forces that added to the authoritarian style he would later inadvertently adopt with his own children. "I'm a looser goose now," he says, "but, nonetheless, I have a built-

Since their introduction, says Ketcham, Dennis' "mother has become more attractive, his dad not quite such a nerd."

"WHY SHOULD I WEAR A MASK? I GET LOTS MORE WHEN THEY SEE IT'S *ME* ASKIN'!"

"WHEN ARE YOU GONNA LEARN ME TO DRIVE? I KNOW ALL THE *WORDS!*"

Going trick-or-treating, Dennis teams up with a certain Dark Knight. Or does he?

despite eyesight so poor all he could make out was the "E" on the eye chart. As a photographer's mate third class, he was assigned to the Photo Research Lab in Maryland. It's not as if he didn't see any action, though; during this time, he met Alice Louise Mahar, fell in love, and got married.

It was also during this time that Ketcham began freelancing cartoons to magazines. By 1944, he was appearing regularly in *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. After the war, he and his wife moved to New York, where Ketcham pursued a freelance cartooning career, and where in 1946, Dennis Lloyd Ketcham was born.

Once *The New York Post* and its syndication service accepted the *Dennis the Menace* proposal, Ketcham's work life became simplified, although far from simple. Now all his efforts were devoted to one strip. The family soon moved to California, and Ketcham sent batches of *Dennis* panels back to New York through the mail for editing. Simple in concept and design, *Dennis the Menace* has withstood four decades of political and social change, and Ketcham thinks the strip could last forever, or at least as long as there are mischievous little boys in the world.

Some things remain constant with *Dennis the Menace*, in addition to the main characters and the fact that Dennis is forever young. "I don't deal with current events, politics or the 10 o'clock news, the horrors of the world," says Ketcham. "I've created this little lifestyle here so I can work ahead as far as I wish, because I'm not held in by current events. Really, only the toys have changed. Dennis used to run around on a tricycle when I first started. And then, when my son Scott was about four, I saw him tooling around the house on a two-wheeler with a friend on the back seat. Two wheels! He's only four! Holy smokes! It was then that I realized they weren't making small two-wheelers back in 1951. So, I threw away the tricycle, and now Dennis rides a little bike, and it's too bad, because the bike is a very sophisticated thing to draw, and it makes it more of a hardship."

Another modern change has been television's impact on the look and ac-

All the friends Dennis has, Margaret, Joey and Gina, came from people Ketcham knew. Ruff the dog the artist's son named.

Dennis and the Wilsons hear the call of the '70s.

tivities of a typical household. "Knowledge that we've had men on the Moon has changed the outlook of many of us."

Ketcham regrets that reruns of the old TV series are still airing on cable TV. In fact, he cringes at the thought of it, calling it "that live-action thing." He fears that people will see those dated reruns and think of Dennis as a child of the '60s. "When it started, the pilot was a knockout, with a very short Jay North. Then, as the years ticked by, Jay got older, still wearing those silly overalls. It got to be too much."

Dennis the Menace is currently syndicated in 1,000 newspapers in 14 languages and in 48 countries, according to Ketcham. He has a stable of about a half-dozen gag writers, and he sees his role as similar to Frank Sinatra or Frankie Avalon—"They don't write all their own songs, they *interpret* songs written by others. I interpret ideas that I accept from writers. It's something like show business, only you don't hear the applause for about three months."

He emphasizes that a great deal of care goes into each drawing, including where the action is set, how the characters are standing, what props are used and how realistic they look. Ketcham works on a tissue pad for his preliminary drawings, then uses a clean piece of drawing board lit from underneath, using the kind of India ink and pen "you would find in an old-fashioned post office, the Gillotte 170, a No. 3 brush to put in some of the heavier dark areas and a little lettering pen to write the caption, and we're off and running."

Batches of two weeks' worth of drawings—12 in all—come off his Strathmore two-ply plate finish drawing board per work session. "My assistants are learning to draw Dennis very nicely, so I may do less and less of him, play a little more golf and do some painting. As they improve, I can back off and smell the flowers a little bit. But I never get bored with Dennis."

As far as celebrating the actual 40th anniversary of the first strip, Hank Ketcham was planning nothing more elaborate than "a cupcake and a candle, then probably go to bed early. You know, anniversaries and birthdays, they don't have any particular attraction for me. It's just another milestone that we'll notice somehow or other, but we're not going to light any firecrackers or disturb anybody's peace in the process."

Movie Menace

John Hughes, the writer/director/producer whose credits include *Home Alone*, *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, was approached by Warner Bros. twice to produce and script the movie version of Hank Ketcham's *Dennis the Menace*. And twice, he said thanks but no thanks.

"I really *wasn't* interested," Hughes admits. "But then they asked me to go talk with Hank Ketcham. I said OK, but at that point I should have known something was up."

Hughes' reluctance stemmed largely from his dislike for the original *Dennis the Menace* TV series (which starred Jay North). "I stupidly assumed that the movie's intent was to follow the TV series. But then Hank told me that the thing he liked most about Dennis the Menace was that he was still an infant who didn't go to school, unlike the older Dennis depicted in the series. Hank's thoughts centered around the innocence of childhood, and gave me some ideas that I felt I could do something with, so I changed my mind."

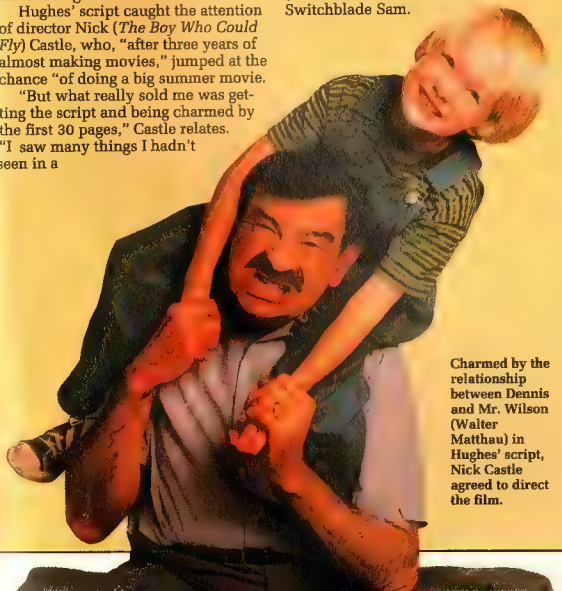
Hughes claims that writing the *Dennis the Menace* script was "fun, but it had been a long time since I had written for a 70-year-old character, so creating Mr. Wilson was a particular delight. The language and the conversations that Wilson had about his father brought back memories of my father and grandfather."

Hughes' script caught the attention of director Nick (*The Boy Who Could Fly*) Castle, who, "after three years of almost making movies," jumped at the chance "of doing a big summer movie.

"But what really sold me was getting the script and being charmed by the first 30 pages," Castle relates. "I saw many things I hadn't seen in a while, and I loved the relationship idea between Dennis and Mr. Wilson."

As far as writer/producer John Hughes (right) is concerned, young Mason Gamble proved to be a perfect *Dennis the Menace*.

Dennis the Menace features newcomer Mason Gamble (CS #35) as Dennis Mitchell, Robert Stanton and Lea Thompson as his parents Henry and Alice, Walter Matthau as George Wilson, Joan Plowright as Martha Wilson and Christopher Lloyd (STARLOG #193) as the villainous Switchblade Sam.



Charmed by the relationship between Dennis and Mr. Wilson (Walter Matthau) in Hughes' script, Nick Castle agreed to direct the film.

Castle claims that *Dennis* star Gamble had the look, energy and stamina to perform during the film's 106-day shooting schedule. What he also discovered was that the child was an accomplished actor.

"He had many subtle acting moves. I could tell him things like, 'I want you to play this scene very innocently.' He knew what that meant, and how to bring it down to that level. He wouldn't just do something cartoonish; he would find the middle ground and the subtleties."

The inclusion of the Switchblade Sam storyline runs contrary to the comic strip, but director Castle was grateful for it.

"Without it, we would have had an episodic series of sequences with Dennis pranking Mr. Wilson. I felt we needed some kind of plot device to keep the audience's interest. The idea of somebody coming into this idyllic neighborhood and being a threat became the diversion we needed between pranks."

Hughes took the villainous side story as something a little bit deeper.

"I feel that that element is what *really* drives the movie," he explains. "*Dennis* is not like *Batman*, there is no villain. But I felt, as I was writing the script, if *Dennis the Menace* is about innocence, what is the threat to innocence? Then, I came up with the shadowy figure that comes into your house at night. And, by association, making the statement that the threat to innocence is ultimately *defeated* by innocence."

—*Marc Shapiro*

All Dennis Photos: Theo Westenberger/Copyright 1993 Warner Bros.

THE METEOR MAN

By DAN YAKIR

All Meteor Man Photos: Copyright 1992 MGM

Look! Up on the screen! It's Robert Townsend as an all-new superhero!

Superman. Batman. Spider-Man. And now...Meteor Man? The relatively exclusive list of comic book superheroes is now being expanded to include a new black superhero, possibly the first to retain his human frailties alongside his otherworldly powers. This hero's creator is Robert Townsend, who wrote and directed the $20-million movie *The Meteor Man*, in addition to starring as the lead. "As a kid, I *always* wanted to play a superhero," says Townsend. "And then I wanted to deal with the human values of being a hero and what a hero really is."

The filmmaker explores all this through the character of Jeff, a timid Washington, D.C. schoolteacher who obtains magical powers—X-ray vision, the ability to fly—after he's hit in the chest by a melting meteor, which dissolves into his skin. This changes him drastically: From an uninvolved observer of inner-city violence who tells his students to eat their lunch quickly and always be ready to run and hide, he turns into a true-blue hero.

"What happens initially is that when Jeff discovers his super-powers, he doesn't know what to do with them," he explains, "so he tells his mother [Marla Gibbs], and she tells the whole neighborhood, because she's proud of him. Right away she goes, 'My son can fly! My son has X-ray vision,' and he reluctantly becomes a superhero, because of community pressure. He goes out to fight crime—and he's a good crimefighter—but what happens along the way is that people begin to rely on him a little bit too much, so that they don't do anything for themselves. That's where the story's human side comes in: When one of his neighbors can't get her groceries

up to the third floor, she asks him to lift them up for her. People begin to abuse his powers.

"In the last part of the story, something happens and he really must deal with who he is and not so much with his power; that's where the change really happens. The only thing I would say without giving it away is that a Kryptonite thing happens which affects his powers, and he has to really deal with himself for a moment. And, when this goes down, the community puts that much more pressure on him and he says, 'Hey, I'm just one person!' In films and television, Superman and Batman always show up at the right time. In this story, what happens is that the hero doesn't show up at the right time. And if he is five minutes late..." Townsend says laughing, leaving his sentence unfinished.

Unlike other picture-perfect comic-book heroes, Townsend insists on making his Meteor Man a person with weaknesses—he's afraid of heights, which forces him to fly at a lower altitude than other veteran superheroes, and he also has a doting mother, which embarrasses him at times. "It all adds to the fact that he's a *real* person with real powers," says the director. Which is why his *super*-powers merely force him to reconfirm his own.

"Everyone has the ability to be a hero," notes Townsend. But does everyone have a costume designing mother like Marla Gibbs?

The villains of the piece—enemies of the community at large—are both young gangs and a crime syndicate. When Jeff destroys a local crack house, he in effect declares war not only on the Golden Lords, drug dealers extraordinaire, but on the syndicate that controls them.

"The Golden Lords are Afro-American boys with golden hair—it's dyed gold," offers the filmmaker. "When I set out to create a supervillain, I wanted him to be based on realty. And it's based on a real gang named Simply Raw, which did everything by contract: If you came to work for the gang in the drug house, they had you sign a contract. They had rules and regulations about working for them—and all the rules led to death. If you used the product, it was death; if you told somebody about where you worked, death. But they were this elite gang; they dressed in designer suits, and so I've created designer suits for the Golden Lords, the hairstyles, everything. They look like a futuristic gang, but they're very much of the here and now."

As mild-mannered teacher Jefferson Reed, Robert Townsend faces evil, the Golden Lords (Another Bad Creation).

According to Townsend, *The Meteor Man* explores the nature of heroism not simply along the lines of helping others improve their lot, but as getting in touch with one's own inner strength and realizing that hidden potential. "Everyone has the ability to be a hero," says Townsend. "It's just that they mostly choose not to be, not to help, not to make a difference. I mean, crime happens all the time, and somebody always sees it. There's always somebody who says, 'I saw somebody going into someone's house, but it ain't my house, so I'm going to keep walkin'' or, seeing someone breaking into a car, they can go to a phone booth and call the police and report the license plate number and describe the person. They don't want to get involved." But that's the only way to solve the country's social ills, the director insists, adding, "because the Meteor Man is a superhero of and for the '90s, he must convey the notion of everybody working together."

Indeed, Townsend believes that as the selfish 1980s are left behind, a new feeling of community is starting to emerge, one that is related to Bill Clinton's presidency. "People now are much more aware of looking out for each other," he maintains. "We shot part of the film during the LA riots, and I watched LA burn and then I saw it rebuilt, you know? During the elections, the first thing that everybody said was about building a better world

All Meteor Man Set Photos Elliott Marks

Reed (Townsend) battles the Golden Lords leader (Roy Fegan) and must "deal with who he is and not so much with his powers."

for our kids, for ourselves. So, I wanted Meteor Man to be grounded in this quality of 'Hey, yeah, I'm one person, but if everybody else took that same attitude, there can be a lot of change.' The core, the fiber, of this superhero story is that *everybody's* a hero."

Townsend, whose previous films—*Hollywood Shuffle* and *The Five Heartbeats*—had little to do with comics, in either style or substance, is a filmmaker short on anger and long on humor and optimism. "I'm from the old school in terms of movies," smiles the director. "I grew up on Frank Capra. When you think of a movie like *It's a Wonderful Life*, you must realize there's something to be said for taking a person on a journey and giving him hope at the end of the rainbow.

"I believe that things *can* change for the better if everybody works together. It might sound corny or whatever, but I believe in the old-fashioned ideals of working hard, being honest and getting your due. In *The Meteor Man*, you are told that you can win. It's very simple, but this affirmation isn't heard often enough. People speak of crime with despair, and they speak of moving away. Jeff, too, says, 'I can't wait to get out of this neighborhood.' But what neighborhood will he move into? If nobody does anything, crime will spread everywhere until there's nowhere to go."

Townsend declares, "I believe in change and in positive energy. So, as a filmmaker, I believe in making films that give people hope, that give them something positive to hold on to. In this country –and it has been proven— you can do anything you want to if you just work hard enough!"

His beliefs, not to mention his artistic formation, go back to childhood in an impoverished Chicago neighborhood. "We were so poor that I couldn't afford to buy comic books," he recalls, laughing. "Instead of buying a comic, you could buy a sandwich and maybe cookies. But I did watch *Superman* and *Batman* on TV, and they were my favorites. TV was a major influence—from *The Outer Limits* to *The Twilight Zone*. I liked the element that *anything* could happen, the element of surprise. So, watching what Superman could do while living in a ghetto in Chicago, I thought to myself, 'Wow! I want to do that one day!' These things stayed in my head ..."

But the filmmaker was also attracted to big-screen heroes such as Errol Flynn, Ronald Coleman and Basil Rathbone, whose speech and inflection he still mimics perfectly. "I created a scene in *Meteor Man* to evoke the flavor of the swashbuckling Flynn movies," he says. "It's actually a pipe fight instead of a sword fight. I grew up on these movies! The character of Jeff has something of Danny Kaye in him – he was always avoiding responsibility until he would finally decide to go for it. With Jimmy Stewart, it was a similar thing. Those characters and movies inspired me to create this one."

Townsend, 35, maintains that his rich fantasy life as a kid became more intense as he grew older. "I still remain in a child's state," he chuckles. "When I was a kid –and my mother will tell you this– I always said that I was an alien, that I came from another planet. I used to stay in the house a lot and watch television, and after the TV went off, I would create my own characters. I had voices for them and everything. In my imagination, because of what the world around me was like, I said, 'I'm going to create another world, where I can fly, where I can do all these things.' In *Meteor Man*, I

think I've tapped all those things in my head. It's an inner-city fairy tale, so you need to have the inner city—the serious side of the drugs and the crime and the gangs but then you have magic in the middle of all of this, and the ability to fly."

Actually, the movie's foundation rests on more than the imaginary life of Townsend as a kid. "At the time, since I had no older brothers or cousins—I had an older sister—I had to run, because the gangs were trying to get me. And I would run! One day I stood up and fought back, and my life changed. It hit me like lightning—I realized I *could* do it! But, there was a point in my life where I was like, 'What if they hit me and knock me out and I die!' I would see someone on *Perry Mason* knock somebody down and they would hit their head on the ground and die. I thought it would happen to me. And when I finally stood up to this one bully, this guy named Reginald I was in the fourth grade—I got in a fight and I said, 'I'm not running.' And my whole life changed, because it wasn't that bad: I could take the punishment, and I gave a little punishment, too."

In test screenings, moviegoers have especially enjoyed Marla Gibbs' shenanigans as Jeff's doting mother For one, when she tries to get a proper costume for her son, she fails to get it right. And so it goes, again and again –and there are several costumes before she manages to perfect her creation. This may create the impression that the movie is spoofing comic-book heroes—an impression enhanced by scenes showing Meteor Man rehearsing his lines, practicing saving people's lives, flying. "So, it's kind of spoofish on that kind of *limited* level," offers Townsend, "but in the final count, the movie is a *tribute* to superheroes.

Frank Gorshin is Mr. Byers and Luther Vandross is a "smooth hit man," two of Meteor Man's myriad antagonists.

There's no spoof involved once Jeff masters his craft and becomes one."

While Townsend found writing the script easy—"I act out all my characters" he says that as a director, he was challenged by the FX, as well as by having to use a huge VistaVision camera to accomplish them. "I've never done that before," he notes, "and it was important for me to keep the vision alive, to put on the storyboards the vision I had in my head."

For lack of a better word, Townsend's cast can be described as all-star

Bill Cosby, who plays Marvin, "the homeless wizard," was available for six days of shooting outdoors, but it rained heavily on four of them. "So, we had to create indoor scenes to tell the story," says Townsend. "The character has nine dogs and we couldn't get them to do anything. So, I created a sequence where he does this magical thing with a cup of coffee. I don't want to give away the story, but he plays a man who finds a piece of the meteor and acquires a bit of magic.

"He's a pleasure to work with. A very disciplined actor, who did everything I asked him to. For a scene where he gets hit by one of the gang members, I wanted to use a stunt double, but he refused, saying, 'I have to take my own hits, because I loved doing this stuff since my days on *I Spy*.'"

James Earl Jones, who plays Mr. Moses, Jeff's apathetic neighbor, undergoes "plenty of changes in the story," according to Townsend. "He's a lovable man who loves jazz and old music, and then he becomes sad and serious—and funny When we filmed the emotional scenes with him trying to help Meteor Man cope with his dilemmas, it was so heartfelt! He went so deep, I had to constantly ask him if he was OK. It was like being in heaven.

"The same goes for Marla Gibbs She behaved like my own mother, like any woman who loves her child and is proud of him. We had a lot of fun, the two of us. And then there was Robert Guillaume, who plays my father, who's this community leader trying to clean up the neighborhood. He that becomes the proud father of the Meteor Man It's supposed to be a secret but they keep telling *everybody*

As Mr Byers, the head of the crime cartel and the Meteor Man's nemesis, Townsend cast Frank Gorshin, as a homage to his character on TV's *Batman* "When I met him I told him that the Riddler was one of my favorite characters, and that I would be honored if he would do a part in this film," recalls the moviemaker. "Frank is a very funny man. If he would forget a line or something, suddenly you would get James Cagney, saying, 'Top

(continued on page 74)

A reluctant superhero, Jeff Reed (Townsend) dons the Meteor Man persona "because of community pressure."

Only the force of "Destino" could forge an animated alliance between Walt Disney and Salvador Dali.

Partners in Surrealism

By JORDAN R. YOUNG

Of all the strange liaisons produced by Hollywood, the coupling of Salvador Dali and Walt Disney was perhaps the strangest. While the brainchild of that union was never given the green light, it nevertheless refuses to die; every two or three years, the project is retrieved from oblivion and revived as a possibility.

To Disney, *Destino* was "just a simple love story—boy meets girl." But to Dali, it was "a magical exposition on the problem of life in the labyrinth of time," in which limp watches fell from heaven, monstrous telephones sprouted legs, sculptures sprang to life and a trickle of ants became a swarm of bicycle riders.

The project was initiated in 1946 when Disney, who owned the rights to a Mexican love ballad by the same title, commissioned the famed surrealist painter to do a story treatment based on his interpretation of the song. Planned as a combination of animation, live action and special effects, the end product was to have been one segment (about six minutes long) of a package film along the lines of *The Three Caballeros* or *Make Mine Music*.

"The name of the song probably appealed more to Salvador Dali than the music," asserts former studio artist John Hench, who assisted Dali in the preparation of storyboards. "Dali had a thing for destiny."

Hench, now Senior VP of Walt Disney Imagineering, remembers Dali as "a kind of renaissance man" who, unlike his public image, was perfectly sane. "Dali said, 'The difference between me and a crazy person is, a crazy person dwells in a kind of fantasy; he's in another room from reality. When I walk in that room, I know where I am; I leave the door open. A *real* crazy person can't get out; the door is locked.' "

Dali was given complete freedom at Disney, Hench recalls. "Walt came in and looked at the work from time to time. He saw the storyboards in progress and decided to let Dali go ahead and see what would happen. Walt was entranced by the whole thing. They had a rapport right from the beginning that was unusual. They got along remarkably, without much conversation. There was a sympathy there."

In addition to working on the storyboards, Hench had the task of "trying to keep the project in some kind of shape we could handle. Dali would usually do a key position and then I would fill in the in-betweens, trying to segue from

one area to another. He had a concept he was going to stick to in a broad sense, but he shared a lot with Walt in his inventive ability. Walt always came in with more situations than perhaps a story could hold, and Dali was the same way. Every morning, he had new ideas. I'm sure we could never have fit all of them in the original time allotted."

The plot, as complicated as it became, couldn't accommodate the fruit of Dali's unfettered imagination. "He was so prolific with ideas I don't think even Luis Bunuel [who worked with Dali on *Andalusian Dog* and *L'Age d'Or*] could use them all," says Hench. "We would go see some really mediocre Western at this little theater in Monterey. Dali would be absolutely entranced, and then afterward, he would tell me what the picture meant. The inevitable stampede of the bulls would be somebody's libido, the short little man would be the alter-ego of the protagonist. He built fabulous stories out of these really banal pictures."

Destino borrowed liberally from the proliferation of images seen in Dali's canvases. The heroine of the piece, a young girl drawn to resemble the shadow of a bell in a church tower, was lifted from a painting he had done a decade earlier, "Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critical Town." The idea of the sculpture coming to life was originally conceived for Ingrid Bergman while he was designing the dream scenes for Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* but was vetoed by the actress, whom Dali wanted to cover with ants. One new idea for the Disney scenario involved a group of baseball players, whose actions were choreographed to resemble a ballet.

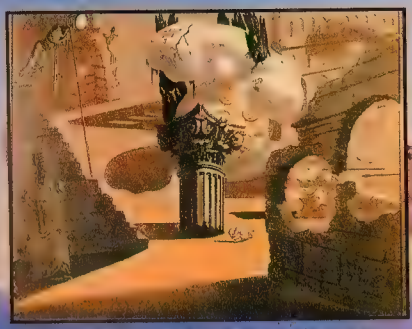
To artist Salvador Dali, *Destino* was "a magical exposition on the problem of life in the labyrinth of time."

Copyright 1946, 1990 The Walt Disney Company/Courtesy Jordan R. Young

To studio artist John Hench, *Destino* was a wondrous collaboration. "Dali had a thing for destiny," he says.

To producer Walt Disney, *Destino* was "just a simple love story—boy meets girl."

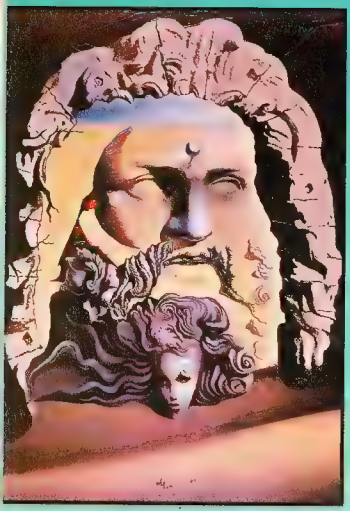
Photo: Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company



Art: Salvador Dali/From Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life (Abbeville Press)

opportunity forever lost, represented in one of the few Dali paintings for project ever published.

All Inspirational Sketch Art: Salvador Dali/From Treasures of Disney Animation Art (Abbeville Press)



To former publicist Bob Moore, *Destino* "was so far ahead of its time in 1946" that it still may not be truly understood.

Dali traveled to the studio every day for a period of two months, later going up to Monterey to finish the artwork. "He came in the morning just like a regular worker. He didn't punch a clock, of course, but I don't think he would have minded punching in," says Hench. "He liked ritual."

At one point in their labors, Dali and Hench decided that Disney deserved to see what they were up to, and made a 15-second test on color film—the sole realization of the project beyond the storyboard stage. The sequence, which was screened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art a few years ago, showed two grotesquely distorted faces mounted on the backs of turtles, moving toward each other on a bleak landscape. As they came together, the space between the profiles took on the shape of a ballerina. Her head was a baseball on the horizon.

Destino was abandoned through no fault of Dali's, simply a change of mind on the part of his employer. "Walt thought the market for package films was gone," explains Hench. "He was an enormously intuitive man; he could look into the future and project a trend. He understood the package concept as communicating a certain thing, and he figured the public needed something else."

Dali, who often said his own destiny was "to save painting from the nihilism of modern art," enjoyed little success in his ventures into film. *L'Age d'Or*, on which he collaborated with Bunuel, was poorly received when it opened. The dream sequences for *Spellbound* were severely cut. And *The Marx Brothers on Horseback Salad*, a scenario that grew out of a friendship with Harpo Marx, was never realized at all.

Still, Dali and Disney remained friends over the years. On a subsequent trip to Hollywood, Dali rode a miniature train in the producer's backyard but was frightened by its realistic precision. Disney visited the painter many times at his home in Port Lligat on the Spanish Costa Brava, once with a proposal to team up on an animated *Don Quixote*. It never reached the drawing board. They also discussed *El Cid*, for which Dali developed a story concept, but nothing came of it.

A few years after *Destino* was laid to rest, the storyboard sketches disappeared in a theft. "The whole portfolio was stolen. I don't know how many hands it passed through, but whoever stole them was discriminating. He kept the best ones," recalls Hench. Eventually, the sketches were purchased by an art dealer in New York, who tried to get Dali to autograph them. The dealer couldn't distinguish between Dali's work and Hench's, and many of the latter's sketches were authenticated as the work of the master. The material that remained was returned to the studio, but many of the treasures—including the art for the film test—were never seen again.

The sketches that survived the theft (55 by Dali, 75 by Hench) are preserved today in the studio archives. A number of *Destino* paintings, including a portrait of Jupiter that hung in Disney's office until his death, are now in storage. The works have never been appraised.

Ten years ago, studio publicist Bob Moore decided it would be nice to revive *Destino* and brought the idea to a marketing meeting. The project was casually discussed and tabled once more. However, the idea is still resuscitated every few years, and may eventually see the light of day, possibly as a segment in a new version of *Fantasia* being contemplated by Roy E. Disney.

"The film is so short it would have to be incorporated with something else, and nobody can make the decision as to what to package it with," says Bob Moore, now retired. "*Destino* could be reactivated at some point in the future," he adds, "but the film was so far ahead of its time in 1946, I don't think people would have understood it then, and I don't know that they would understand it now."

To readers, *Destino* represents a story it took almost two years to publish—due to the scarcity of film art.

All Destino Art: Copyright 1993, 1948 Walt Disney Productions

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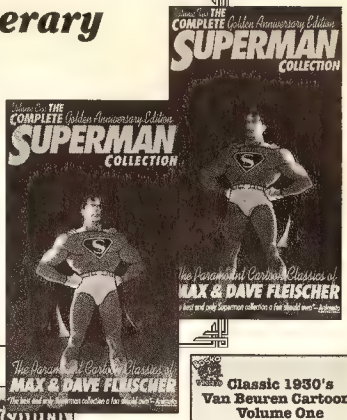
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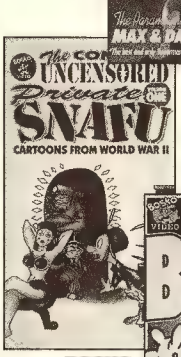

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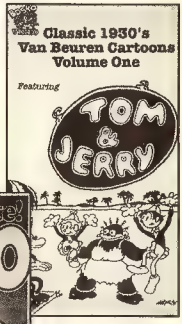

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Busiek

(continued from page 45)

back!" And then, once Julie starts dating this guy, Darkman starts disguising himself as the guy, and going out with her himself, which only screws things up even more. It's a lot of fun to write.

I finished the first series. The second is slated to be a fully painted series that brings together Darkman and Ghost Rider. I want to do it so that during the entire series, Darkman thinks Ghost Rider is a hallucination.

CS: And continuing in the Vampirella vein, you're also writing *Elvira* for Claypool Comics.

BUSIEK: Elvira, Mistress of the Dark, the horror movie hostess with the mostest. Claypool Comics, a new company, has four titles. *Elvira's* the first, and the other three are an interrelated horror-adventure trio that all take place in a town nicknamed "Fear City" because of all the horrible stuff that's happening there. Those books are *Phantom of Fear City*, by Steve Englehart and Matt Haley; *Soulsearchers and Company* by Peter David, Amanda Conner and Jim Mooney; and *Deadbeats* by Richard Howell and Ricardo Villagran.

The *Elvira* series isn't tightly connected to the Fear City books, although there are some characters that appear in both series. *Elvira* features comedy/horror adventures, as you might expect. My first story, drawn by Neil Vokes, is in *Elvira* #2; it involves the winner of a contest on Elvira's show who turns out to be a teenage werewolf. He "wolfs out" on the air. Trouble is, Elvira's sponsor at the time is a depilatory cream company—they yank their sponsorship. Elvira decides to fix things—and since she can't do anything about the sponsor right away, she'll help the werewolf solve his curse. They get involved in an ancient mystic bingo scam.

I just plotted a story where Elvira runs afoul of Dracula and his two henchmen, Renfield and Stimpfield—two very animated characters who've been stolen out from under their creator. Now, they're not as clever, but they do what they're told.

It's funny. Working on *Darkman*, I'm doing my best to give it the same flavor as the movie, and everything gets checked over by someone at the movie company to make sure I get it right. On *Elvira*, the people who are approving plots and art are Cassandra Peterson—Elvira herself—and her husband. It's not a case of somebody who isn't necessarily in on the creative process—someone who simply has a licensing job. This is the woman who *created* the Elvira persona. If she says it's good, then you know we're doing something right.

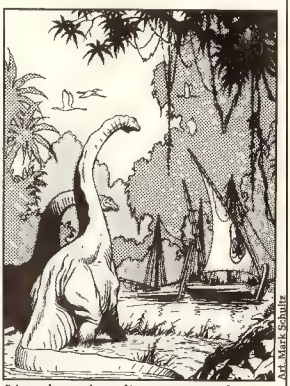
Schultz

(continued from page 54)

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs will run vertically down the left side of the cover.

"Denis Kitchen came up with that title for the first *Xenozoic* collection, and it captured people's imaginations," Schultz explains. The latest (and third) collection is *Time in Overdrive* (which reprints *Xenozoic Tales* #9-#12). The 128-page trade paperback featuring eight stories and an introduction by legendary dinosaur artist William Stout, is being published this month. A hardcover edition follows in August.

Beginning this fall on CBS Saturday mornings, there will be an animated *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*. Nelvana—previously responsible for the *Beetlejuice* (CS #10) and *Tintin* (CS #22) cartoons—is producing the animated series. Executive producers are Steven (*Die Hard*) de Souza and Sasha (*The Doors*) Harari. De Souza, a longtime comics fan who penned an early



Art: Mark Schultz

It's a place where dinosaurs roam, but it's not Jurassic Park.

unused *Flintstones* film script (CS #1), wrote the pilot. Schultz is involved as a creative consultant.

Xenozoic merchandise won't be far behind. Kitchen Sink has already produced *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* candy bars and a postcard line. Next up: An arcade game from Capcom, a home video game from Nintendo as well as a hand-held Game Boy version. A major toy licensing deal is in discussion.

Whatever finally happens with the toys, cartoons and video games, Mark Schultz is certain of one thing. "I've only scratched the surface of the Xenozoic Universe, and there are so many more stories to tell. At the day's end, that's the biggest thrill for me, getting paid to be a storyteller."

And drawing dinosaurs.

Metal

(continued from page 9)

ing still, they're not people anymore—they become human ribbons," says Jurgens. "That makes it fun. They're Play-Doh!"

This mini-series will produce significant changes in the title characters. "There *will* be a difference by the time it's all said and done," Jurgens promises.

"As Mike says, we're raising the stakes for the Metal Men. The risk factor is going to increase for them dramatically—and there might even be some new Metal Men! And there might be other changes, too, along with deep secrets that will be revealed."

Some of the secrets will revolve around the responsometers—the mysterious devices that give each of the robots their personalities.

"The big secrets all revolve around what the responsometer is, what it does, *how* it connects to the Metal Men and their personalities and where their personalities came from," says Carlin.

Although they enjoy each of the characters, the team admits to some slight favorites.

"I like Lead, because I don't have to spell as well," laughs Carlin.

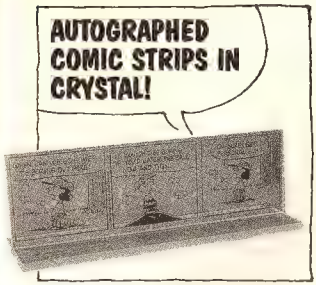
"Lead is definitely my favorite, too," agrees Jurgens. "I've made him rounder, even bigger and fatter. There's something about a character that goes 'Duh' throughout the entire thing that's a lot of fun. I can give him the goofiest expressions. Mercury is my second favorite."

"Gold and Iron are a little straight as characters, which is OK, because they contrast," Carlin notes. "They're not as broad, and not as much fun to do, but I find they're necessary to the mix."

The relationship between Magnus and Tina, the lovesick Platinum robot, has always been one of the strangest and potentially kinkiest, in all of comics. "We have some secrets there, too. There are some skeletons in the closet!" Carlin notes.

Pondering the possibility of a follow-up monthly, Carlin turns serious. Sort of. "I would love to see a regular series even if it *didn't* sell well!" he jokes. "I don't know if anybody else would want it. It's a lot of fun. Dan's art is great, it's fun to play off these characters and I really think that this is going to humanize the comic a lot. And if there's a regular series, there are many personalities to drive the series, and to play with, so it could be really fun. With six characters, there are plenty of ideas.

"*Metal Men* is one of my favorite series from the old days," adds Mike Carlin. "Hopefully, the world is ready for it again!"



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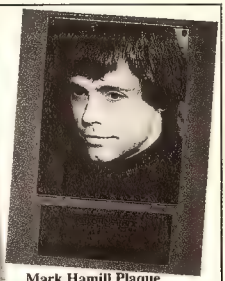

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Meteor

(continued from page 67)

of the world, ma! Meteor Man, get over here, Meteor Man!' and then he would go into Richard Burton in *Camelot*. He's always inspired me because as a standup comedian he was more character-driven, he would get into long monologues and different themes, so I really dug working with him."

Singer Luther Vandross, who's making his acting debut as a hired killer pursuing the superhero, was cast because the director likes his music and felt he could play a "smooth hit man" with panache. "He said he had never picked up a gun before in his life, but his scenes came out real well."

While currently preparing several projects—a new comedy for Eddie Murphy, another film about the life of Duke Ellington, and a TV variety show for Fox in which he will sing, dance and act out myriad characters—Townsend is still tending to the marketing and promotion of *Meteor Man*. Appropriately, Marvel is publishing a *Meteor Man* comic book, in which, says the filmmaker, "Spider-Man will help our hero solve a crime." There will be six issues in all. "So, you see," Robert Townsend concludes, "Meteor Man has already been welcomed into the world of superheroes."

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Larkin

(continued from page 27)

in my mother's house, there are some original *Doc Savage* magazines," he laughs. "My father was an avid reader during WW II and I picked it up in '64, when I was in ninth or tenth grade."

Larkin attended Farmingdale College on Long Island, but studied mostly mechanicals, paste-up and design, adding that he's basically self-taught in illustration. "When I got out of Farmingdale, I worked for an advertising agency and pushed toward the illustration end of the business, where I was doing a lot of pen and ink for black-and-white ads. Then, I ended up working for a surgeon for six years—while I was still freelancing for Marvel and Bantam—and did a lot of interior figure drawings. It was all anatomy stuff—blood, bones, you name it."

Before *Doc Savage*, Larkin received combat experience working for Marvel Comics in the late '70s. There were numerous paintings for trade paperback collections of *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*, and several paintings for Pocket Books' Marvel Novel Series, featuring characters such as Iron Man, Doctor Strange, Captain America and the X-Men.

"I think the first cover I did for Marvel was *The Haunt of Horror*, and that was sometime back in the '70s. All through the '70s, I did a lot of the black-and-white magazine covers. I did the cover to *The Dazzler* #1, a down-size regular comic, but most were the black-and-whites."

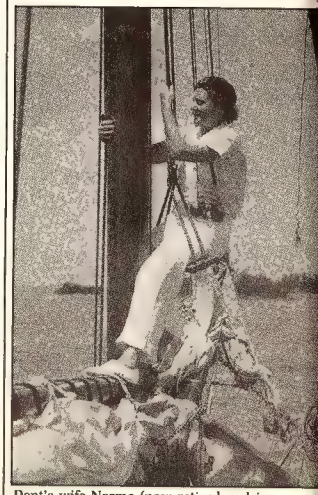
From 1980 through 1987, Larkin also crafted numerous black-and-white paintings for network ads in *TV Guide*. "I did *a lot* of stuff for ABC, sometimes three to four b&w paintings *a week*, and that really took away from my color work. I did so many that I can't remember them all. I handled some of *The Fall Guy* ads, and all of the *Blue Thunder* ads. Every week Blue Thunder [the helicopter] was being chased by this or that, and they were always blowing up something. It got so confusing, I didn't know what the hell I was doing in those days."

There was also a brief stint on Don Pendleton's *Executioner* paperbacks "way back when." Larkin's currently illustrating Bantam's *Eagle Force* series. Still, he looks back fondly on his tenure as the Artist of Bronze. He also sees a bright future for Doc Savage and his celebrated return to new adventures after 41 years.

"I think Doc will keep on going, especially with the new writer [CS contributor/novelist Will Murray]. I just hope I can do something with the Doc Savage series again someday," Bob Larkin says, "because I would like to try something different."

Dent

(continued from page 34)



Dent's wife Norma (now retired and in her 90s) relaxes on their yacht.

"Lord, no!" he exclaims. "And remember, I didn't have Doc brought from another planet the way Superman was. I just had Doc reared and trained by scientists, that's all. I've never said Doc could jump over the Empire State Building the way Superman can. I just say Doc could build a 65-pound pocket-sized helicopter to get him over the Empire State Building. Scientists are working on such a gadget right now. I never have Doc use or do anything that isn't possible in the laboratory right now."

And was it always this way?

"Well, no. But after the flood of super-people, phantoms, batmen and such people that Doc started coming out of the cartoonists' and writers' ink-wells, my stomach kind of turned," Lester Dent says. "I've toned Doc down now to where he is not the slam-bang fire-eater he was. He still discovers strange tribes of people in the heart of one of the world's deserts, but he doesn't come across nations in the Earth's interior any more. There's another thing about Doc that I want you to note, too: *He has never left this planet*. No matter how much it handicaps him to stay here on Earth, he has never abandoned us and moved the scene of his operations to some other planet."

Doc Savage still remains, like his creator, a supreme adventurer in all parts of Earth, factual and fictional.

Arabian Nights

Polishing their magic lamp, John Musker & Ron Clements conjure up "Aladdin."

By KYLE COUNTS

In Hollywood, a director is largely measured by how well his most recent film fared at the box office. Imagine, then, trying to repeat the success of a movie that has grossed upwards of $200 million worldwide. John Musker and Ron Clements, co-directors of *The Little Mermaid* and *The Great Mouse Detective*, don't have to imagine the inherent pressures of such a scenario: As co-directors (and co-writers with *Little Monsters*' Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio) of Walt Disney Pictures' newest animated feature *Aladdin*, they are literally following in their own footsteps.

Had studio chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg been a bit more insistent, however, Musker and Clements might have taken on the tentatively-titled *King of the Jungle* (slated as the studio's 1994 animated release) instead of *Aladdin* as their follow-up to *The Little Mermaid*. "There were three projects we were offered [after *Mermaid*]," recalls Musker, sitting in the pair's office at the studio's Glendale, California animation facility.

"There was *King of the Jungle*, which was the one that Jeffrey wanted us to do the most, *Swan Lake* and *Aladdin*. Of the three, *Swan Lake* seemed like it was too close to *Mermaid*. *King of the Jungle*...well, I think we're a little more oriented toward fantasy. But we really liked *Aladdin*, and it seemed like it could be exciting."

The year was 1988, and Howard Ashman and Alan Menken had already written the song score for *Aladdin*—it was, in fact, written during the final stages of *The Little Mermaid* and before *Beauty & the Beast*. Not only had the duo penned six tunes, Ashman had written a 40-page story treatment for *Aladdin* as part of his three-picture deal (one live-action, two animated) with Disney.

Continues Musker, "I think it was Howard who suggested doing *Aladdin* [to the studio]. We weren't involved at all at that point; we were trying to do *Mermaid*. From what we could piece together, it seemed like the studio liked some of the songs, but they tried to develop a script based on Howard's treatment and didn't like the scripts they were getting. That's when they said, 'Let's just get a story we like and then we'll fold songs back into it.' So, they sort of abandoned his treatment."

By the time Musker and Clements (who discussed past projects in STARLOG #108 and CS #11) came aboard, several scripts had been written for *Aladdin*—including one by *Beauty & the Beast* screenwriter Linda Woolverton (CS #25)—and a "certain amount of visual development" had occurred, according to Clements. "We read Howard's treatment and some of the scripts, but we basically started from scratch, using elements from this and that. We re-developed it into a new treatment and a new script."

Photos: Gene Trindl

John Musker and Ron Clements, *Aladdin*'s co-directors and co-writers, faced the challenge of following *Beauty & the Beast* and their own *Little Mermaid*.

"We didn't literally start over," interjects Musker, "but we had to back away from [the project] for a while; we were so close to it. Our first draft... well, Jeffrey [Katzenberg] didn't endorse it quite so enthusiastically. We needed to get some fresh eyes, writing-wise, so we auditioned Ted and Terry, live-action writers who had done a script for [Disney's] Hollywood Pictures. They came in and helped re-outline the story, and then they wrote scenes and we sort of rewrote over their stuff. Some of our original script is still in there and some isn't. Some is Robin [Williams], a bunch of it is Ted and Terry. It's the usual Hollywood mishmash," he laughs.

In discussing the differences between the early drafts of *Aladdin* and the final result, Musker notes that "we pushed the Genie more in the earlier versions. We saw him as a *real* animation-type character, as sort of our Beetlejuice—when he's on stage, he takes over. In Linda's treatment, Aladdin had a dog sidekick, but we felt that a monkey hadn't been done very often in animation, so we [changed him to a monkey]. The Princess in Linda's treatment had a hand-maiden/confidante. We got rid of [the companion] and made her a Bengal tiger instead; we felt it gave the story more of an animation hook."

Other changes included combining the two villains found in the original Aladdin stories into one heavy (here named Jafar) and adding a flying carpet.

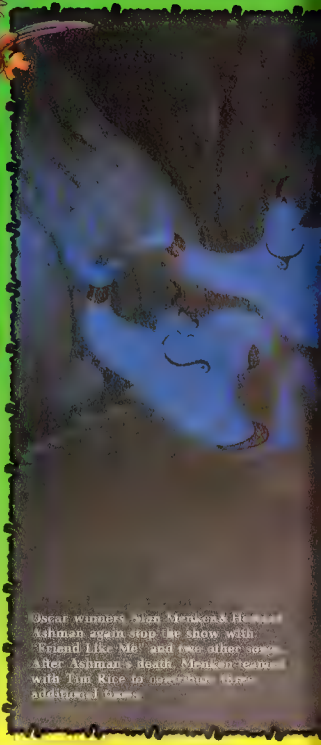
"The flying carpet has personality, it's one of Aladdin's sidekicks," explains Clements. "I don't think it was in any of the other versions. We wanted to have a flying carpet, certainly, because it's part of the Arabian fantasy thing, although there is no magic carpet in the actual story."

Then, there was the "Jewish American Princess" in Ashman's treatment (described bluntly by Musker as "sort of a shrew") and Aladdin's "Judy Garland / true-blue / sidekick / tomboy / girl friend," whom he takes for granted until the story's final reel, whereupon she becomes his romantic interest. The tomboy girl friend was excised, but the princess, named Jasmine, remained, though she was fashioned by the duo in the "Robin Hood-type" mold. "She's still very strong-willed and opinionated," offers Musker with a chuckle. "She isn't whining to Daddy about bounced checks or getting her nails done."

Clements says that he and Musker "really liked" Ashman and Menken's early score for the film, and "fortunately, some of the songs seemed to fit within the new version, although a couple of them didn't." Musker elucidates, "There were three songs we thought would still work, and of those songs, two are still in the movie. The other one was sung to Aladdin's mother, a song called 'Proud of Your Boy,' where he says, 'Mom, I'm going to make good someday...let me show you that I'm not this lazy, loud-mouthed layabout that you think I am.' "

Once "Proud of Your Boy" was put on story reels to show to the studio executives, Mom was dismissed by Jeffrey Katzenberg as "a zero" and dropped from the film. Musker recalls that there was "some controversy about whether or not we should just get rid of Mom and focus more on the relationship between Aladdin and Jasmine, which is ultimately what we did..."

"...which meant we lost the song. It was a really beautiful song," Clements laments. "The songs that are still in from that original version are the Genie's 'Friend Like Me' and 'Arabian Nights,' the opening title song. When we came in, there were new songs that



Oscar winners Alan Menken & the late Howard Ashman again stop the show with "Friend Like Me" and two other songs. After Ashman's death, Menken teamed with Tim Rice to contribute three additional tunes.

Howard was involved with—this was maybe a year-and-a-half or so after he had written the originals."

When Ashman wrote "Friend Like Me," he envisioned the Genie as being played by a commanding black actor along the lines of Geoffrey Holder. But, as the Genie is basically a slave who yearns for his freedom, "we felt that him being black could be seen as demeaning," comments Musker. "We didn't want the Genie to be black, but we still liked Howard's song, which was written as a sort of Fats Waller tune. So, we kept the tune, but tailored it to Robin a bit more, so he could adopt different personas at different times. So, within the song, he goes from being a bluesy jazz guy to a very stuffy waiter."

Ashman also wrote a song with the rather odd-sounding title "Humiliate the Boy," in which Jafar turns the tables on Aladdin. As more story changes were made, the song lost its relevance and a new villain song was substituted [a reprise of "Prince Ali" with new lyrics by Tim Rice]. When a

rough version of *Aladdin* was screened for Katzenberg in April 1991, a month following Ashman's death, both "Proud of Your Boy" and "Humiliate the Boy" were still part of the score.

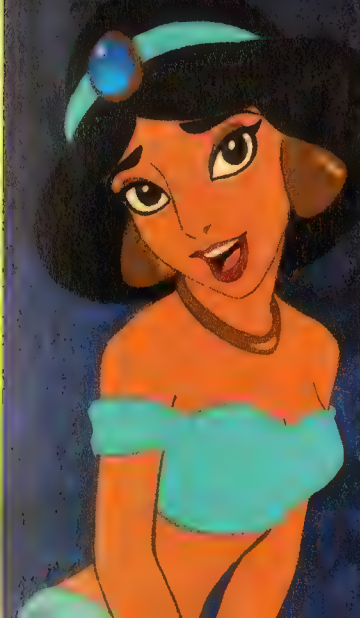
"We didn't know that Howard was sick during *Mermaid*," notes Clements "Even as we started working with him again on *Aladdin*, we didn't know right away. When we went to New York to visit him—we hadn't seen him for a while—I think he knew when we saw him that we would know something was wrong. But even though he was really sick, he continued to work on the project. 'Prince Ali,' the Genie's big number, was written when he was pretty sick, and it's a great song."

Of course, not knowing if Williams could sing was a source of major concern for all involved, but even Ashman was eventually won over by the casting of the *Fisher King* star. Recalls Clements, "When we were writing our script, we were thinking Robin. That's unusual, because normally we're not real big on big-name voices. But in this case, in terms of what you could do an-

Originally a dog in earlier scripts, Aladdin's sidekick, Abu, became a monkey. Later, the Genie turned him into an elephant.

The two baddies from the original tales became one, Jafar (voiced by Jonathan Freeman, animated by Andreas Deja), the better to bewitch the Sultan.

imation-wise, we pictured the Genie as a shape-changer, and we wanted him to also be a shape-changer vocally. There didn't seem to be anybody who could do that sort of thing as well as Robin."



One question often posed to the directors concerning Williams is how much of his performance was improvised and how much was scripted. Says Musker, "In his introductory lines, the Genie says, 'What would you wish of me...the ever-impressive, the often-imitated, but never-duplicated Genie of the lamp?' That was a line we wrote, and in fact, it was stolen from Johnny Valiant, some cheesy wrestler guy who used to use that line.

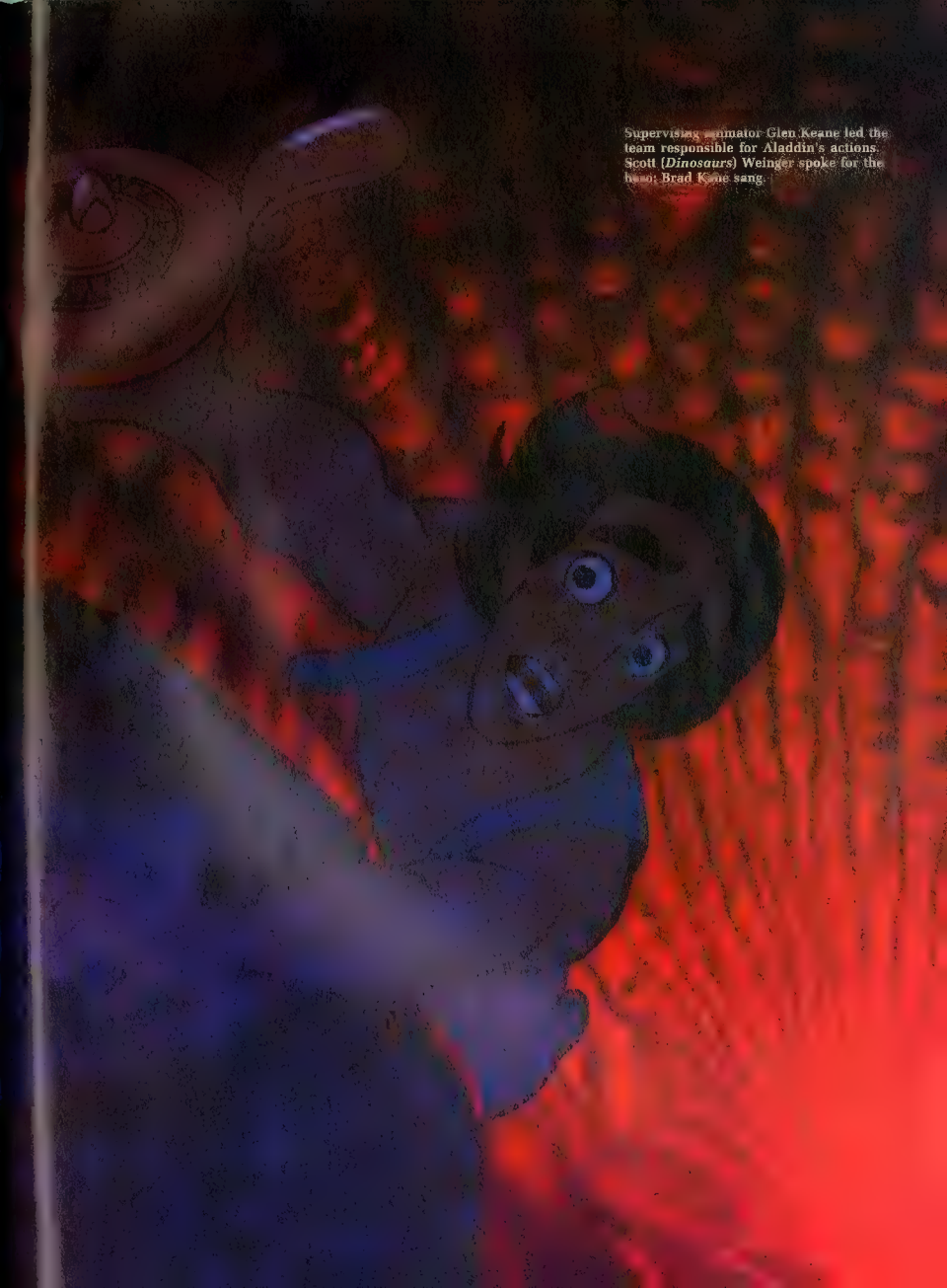
"So when Ed [Gombert, storyboard artist] storyboarded it, he did a different visual joke on each one of those phrases. On 'ever-impressive,' he did a big muscle guy, and on 'the often-imitated,' he did a little ventriloquist puppet, and for the 'never-duplicated,' he had the Genie multiplying into multiple Genies. When Robin saw the muscle guy, he went into this 'Arnold' [Schwarzenegger] kind of thing, and when he saw the ventriloquist bit, he did a Señor Wences-type thing."

Musker credits supervising animator Eric Goldberg (CS #30) with "developing" the Genie's character and "selling Jeffrey" on the idea of using Williams. "Jeffrey was nervous about him being *too* comical, so Eric took one of Robin's comedy albums and did a little piece of animation to it. We showed it to Jeffrey and he said, 'Yeah, let's go try and hire Robin based on that.'"

Goldberg was present at most of Williams' recording sessions. Afterwards, he, Musker and Clements would wade through Williams' many takes to find the pearls that would serve as springboards for the final animation. "Ron and I would get together with Eric, with all the takes transcribed," smiles Musker. "It was just a *mountain* of material. We decided to boil it down to the funniest stuff, without worrying about continuity; just what made us laugh. Eric was heavily involved in picking the takes. He would create visual jokes based on Robin's tracks."

"Every step of the way, [the character] was embellished," adds Clements. "He was designed so we could do that, it was free-form. The Genie is a stand-up comedian; that's his persona. He's trying to be entertaining. He likes getting reactions from Aladdin, so there's some justification story-wise as to why he's 'on' most of the time. But he also has this other more sensitive side to his personality, and his feelings can get hurt easily. So, you get these two sides: This showman-type guy, and then you get a little glimpse of the guy underneath."

Animated in a "Robin Hood-type" mold by Mark Henn, Princess Jasmine was voiced by Linda Larkin. Lea (*Miss Saigon*) Salonga sang "A Whole New World."



Supervising animator Glen Keane led the team responsible for Aladdin's actions. Scott (*Dinosaurs*) Weinger spoke for the hero; Brad Kane sang.

All Aladdin Art & Photos Copyright 1992 The Walt Disney Company

Conjuring up the Genie's magic was supervising animator Eric Goldberg and his team, illustrating Robin Williams' vocal antics.

The Flying Carpet zoomed under supervising animator Randy Cartwright while Duncan Marjoribanks animated Abu (monkey chatter by Frank Welker).

The comedy is painted in "broader strokes" than either *The Little Mermaid* or *Beauty & the Beast*, says Musker, in part due to Williams' Genie, whom he describes as "over the top. Generally, things are more extreme in this movie. It's also, by its nature, a little lighter. We want you to get caught up in the story, but it isn't quite as 'life or death' and may not cut quite as deep emotionally [as *Mermaid* or *Beauty*]. But there are other things that you get in return."

"It's an exciting time for animation," opines Clements, gracefully switching the subject. "We've both been at Disney quite a while; there was a period when we first started working here where we felt like all the good stuff was done 40 years ago, and no matter what happened, we would *never* be able to do anything that could really compare to the great stuff that came before.

"But something happened in the last few years —with *Roger Rabbit, Mermaid* and *Beauty & the Beast*—that made it feel as if some barriers were breaking down and that there's still potential in this medium. Certainly, the talent pool has risen. The quality of animators that we have -state-of-the-art might be one [way to describe them]. The future seems exciting; we're in a new cycle of expanding the medium."

A reference is made regarding a story about the film in the trade paper *Variety*, which describes *Aladdin* as "completely different" from any other animated film made at the studio. Explains Clements, "I do think this isn't a film that would have or could have been made in the '40s. It's a film 'of its time,' and we wanted that, to a degree. We wanted a timeless quality to it—we definitely didn't want the film to be something that would be obsolete in a few years."

"This is a 'Baby Boom' movie, for better or worse," Musker points out. "With us being in our '30s, and Robin being relatively our age, there's this cultural cross-referencing in this film that really hits home to people like us who grew up on television."

While undeniably a Disney movie, *Aladdin* forges its own territory in terms of its look, Musker believes. "Certainly, past Disney pictures have tried to hew their own stylistic approach within the Disney umbrella. People in-house know that *Alice in Wonderland* doesn't look like *Pinocchio*, which doesn't look like *Snow White*. Likewise with this film. The staff can certainly see the difference between this and *Beauty & the Beast* in terms of its two-dimensional background design elements and character designs. But whether or not the moviegoing public can really see a marked difference, I don't know."

What further sets *Aladdin* apart from its two immediate predecessors—aside from the fact that the film takes place in what Clements calls a "specific, stylized world"—is that the film utilizes a more saturated color palette. "In *Fantasia*, they used a similar approach," Musker reveals. "There isn't as much black in this movie. When you go into shadow in this movie, the shadows have color.

"They're either blue or they're warm shadows; they aren't just black or greyed-down versions of the same colors. Richard Vanderwende, the production designer, and Bill Perkins, the art director, really wanted to go for a saturated color palette. So, if you stuck us next to *Beauty & the Beast*, that film may look more muted, more 'storybook,' to hark back to *Snow White*. We've gone the other way, to go with a bolder palette."

Vanderwende, who came to *Aladdin* from Industrial Light & Magic, is the first production designer to work on an animated Disney feature from beginning to end. He was already at work on the film when Musker and Clements arrived.

"As I mentioned, there was a certain amount of visual development that had been done, including a series of paintings by Richard that we saw and got really excited about," says Clements. "It was something we had talked about before seeing Richard's paintings: Making a movie that was a combination of a two-dimensional graphic style and three-dimensional lighting and overlay within that. There's something unrealistic about everything in the movie, and yet it's believable. It feels like real space that you can enter, and yet it's not real.

"The way Richard uses light is really unique. When we saw those paintings, we were really inspired by them. So, we worked with Richard from the very beginning [of our involvement], and he stayed with the movie."

A squawking scene-stealer, Iago (fowl voice by Gilbert Gottfried, parrot animation by Will Finn) understudied evil with Jafar.

As per usual, Musker and Clements split *Aladdin's* sequences among them so that the labor-intensive production would flow more smoothly. Says Musker of their modus operandi, "We've discovered through past pictures that it helps to divide the film into sequences and supervise them [individually]. It gives us a little more pride of ownership. Maybe, too, there's a little competitiveness between us, although not much.

"Ron did half of the songs, and I did half. I did most of the action pieces, but he also did a few. I'm a little more staging-oriented, and Ron's really good in terms of the sincere, emotional scenes. So when you want insincerity, I usually do it, and when you want sincerity, you bring in Ron," Musker laughs.

Witnessing audience reaction to *Beauty & the Beast* before its official opening was, the directors admit, enough to give them cold feet. "It was really horrifying to be at various screenings where that film got a standing ovation," offers Musker. "We were at the wrap party afterwards and we saw Jeffrey, and he walked up and said, 'Now you know what they felt like following *Mermaid*.' But this was before *Beauty* had been released in theaters, so it wasn't even based on any awards. Watching it with an audience and seeing the reaction it got, we were pretty intimidated."

"But," interjects Ron Clements, "there was a good thing that came out of it, too, which is, as each film becomes more successful, it makes you want to push harder. As for the studio, if a movie doesn't do well, then there's a tendency to pull back [on the next one]. But, instead, there was a feeling along the lines of, 'OK, let's see if we can go further than that,' which was real encouraging."

Fantasies aside, no director sets out to make a classic, John Musker says. One is consumed only with "getting the job done and getting through it. You set out to make a film that works. Sometimes there are films that have great, great things in them that don't work, and sometimes there are films that are just OK, but everything seems to work. You can only really focus on making the film do what you want it to do and try to make it work for an audience. Beyond that, you have no control over what happens."

Dave Pruiksma animated the befuddled Sultan (voiced by Douglas Seale).

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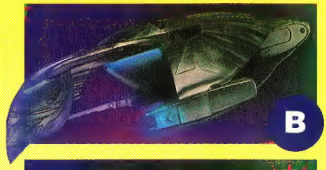

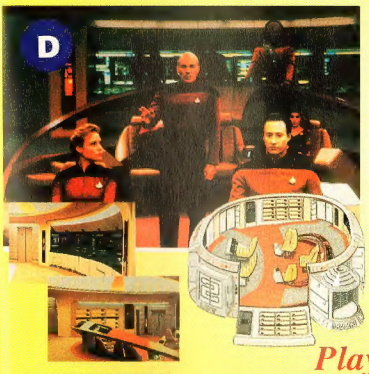

A. TRANSPORTER™
The Molecular Beam Transportation System
Appears to "transport" figures to and from remote areas. Beam your action figures and watch them disappear and reappear. Highly detailed features, authentic transporting sounds and effects! Batteries not included. Figures not included. Authentic control panel! Works with all *ST:TNG* figures! Individually numbered! Includes blueprint! 6lbs. $59.95

B. ROMULAN WARBIRD™
The Ultimate Enemy Battle Cruiser
Use the cloaking sound to become "invisible" for a sneak attack, then blast 'em fast with the Disruptor Cannon. Working engine lights and four realistic sounds. Batteries not included. Authentic Warbird sounds. Hit shields and engines! Realistic engine lights! Blueprints! 3 lbs. $39.95

C. KLINGON ATTACK CRUISER™
The Most Powerful Warship in the Galaxy
You're in control of one of the most feared Warships in the known Universe. Forward-mounted disruptor cannon. Working engine lights and four authentic sounds. Batteries not included. Highly detailed 15" Replica. Individually numbered! Includes blueprint! 3 lbs. $39.95

Playmates® making Star Trek® History

D. BRIDGE PLAYSET™
The Control Center for the *Enterprise* ™
It's the Bridge of the *Enterprise*. This huge galactic playset replica comes with a working tactical control station and 8 authentic sounds. Features a light-up viewscreen, working doors, turbo lift, conn and ops stations, pull-out work station seats and 3 pivoting command seats. Batteries not included. Figures not included. Mega Playset Holds the Entire Crew! Light Up Conn/Ops Stations! Light Up Viewscreen with Interactive Lights & Sounds! Phaser, Tractor Beam and Photon Torpedo Effects! Individually numbered! Includes blueprints! Available Nov. '93! 9 lbs. $79.95

E. TRICORDER™
Portable Sensing, Computing and Data Communications Device
Spring open the Tricorder and analyze audible frequencies from all over the galaxy. By engaging the touch sensitive buttons, you activate working lights and authentic sounds taken directly from the hit TV show. Batteries not included. Secret ID switch springs open the Tricorder to ready position! Interactive Analyzer Button with lights and sounds! Pitch control switch for authentic life form readings! Belt clip! Individually numbered! Blueprint! 2 lbs. $15.95

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STAR TREK® COLLECTIBLES!

Please indicate quantity of each being ordered. Available only in USA. Sorry we cannot fill Canadian or Overseas orders.

To cover **postage & handling,** please add $7.00 per item. Merchandise will be sent UPS in Aug. '93, Bridge Playset in Nov. '93.

___ **A. Transporter $59.95**
___ **B. Romulan Warbird $39.95**
___ **C. Klingon Cruiser $39.95**
___ **D. Bridge Playset $79.95**
___ **E. Tricorder $15.95**

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The Official Alien™ Collectibles!

Collect and display these sensational model kits, featuring creatures, spacecraft and machinery from all three ALIEN movies. To insure accuracy—down to the last detail!—each model has been painstakingly researched and designed with key movie personnel. Models with HT numbers are vinyl; models with HAL numbers are plastic. Assembly and painting required.

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Facehugger w/Fetus
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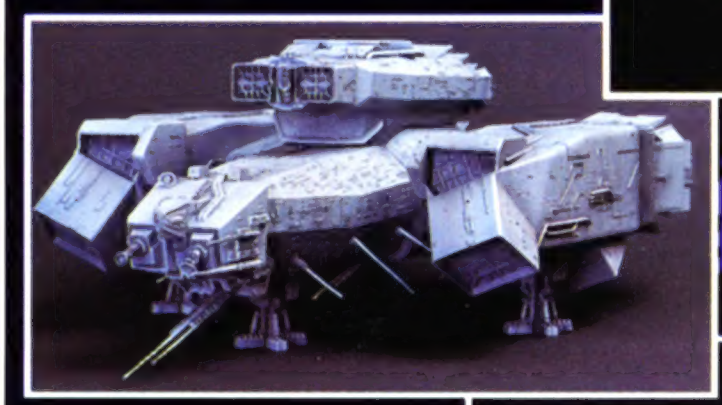
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Approx. 16" long
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Space Jockey w/Astronauts
Approx. 12" long. $79.98

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Approx. 14" long. $44.98

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Approx. 9" long. $44.98

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Approx. 46" long
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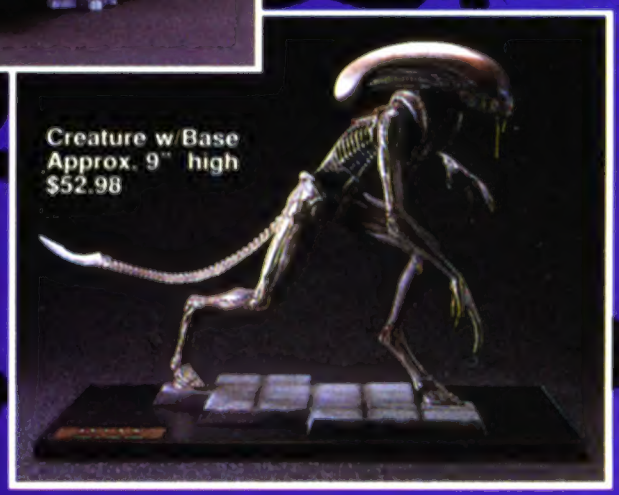
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Approx. 9" high
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Chestburster
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Plastic/Vinyl Model Kits

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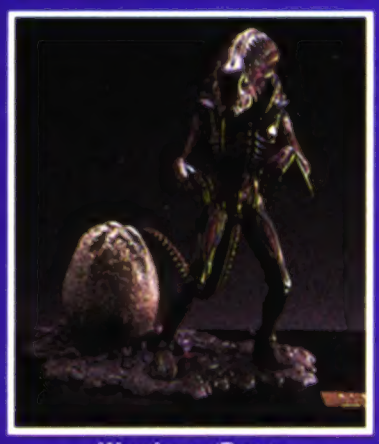
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Facehugger
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